THE GOTHICK NORTH

* *

THESE SAD RUINS

BY
SACHEVERELL
SITWELL

THE GOTHICK NORTH

A study of Mediaeval Life, Art, and Thought to be completed in three volumes.

1. The Visit of the Gypsies
2. These Sad Ruins
3. The Fair-haired Victory

see Volume I

1st ed.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024

https://archive.org/details/thesesadruins0000sach

THESE
SAD
RUINS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

Prose. THE GOTHICK NORTH, a Study of Mediaeval Life, Art, and Thought, to be completed in three volumes.

1 THE VISIT OF THE GYPSIES
2 THESE SAD RUINS
3 THE FAIR-HAIRED VICTORY

SOUTHERN BAROQUE ART

GERMAN BAROQUE ART

ALL SUMMER IN A DAY : an Autobiographical Fantasia

Poetry. THE HUNDRED AND ONE HARLEQUINS

THE THIRTEENTH CÆSAR

THE CYDER FEAST

POOR YOUNG PEOPLE (in collaboration with Edith and Osbert Sitwell)

The Gothick North

A Study of Mediaeval Life, Art, and Thought

* *

These Sad Ruins

by

Sacheverell Sitwell

Duckworth
3 Henrietta Street, London
1929

All rights reserved

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I.—Dialogue in the Apple-Wood	1
II.—These Sad Ruins	69
III.—Siesta	85
IV.—At the Play	90
V.—Casement and Guitar	101
VI.—Love-Scene	108
VII.—Epilogue	125
VIII.—Life in the Dead Street	140
Notes	149

I

DIALOGUE IN THE APPLE-WOOD

THE evening was still quite young when I came out from the hotel and started forth in search of a café. There were several just down the slope of the hill, and choosing the cleanest among them I walked inside, for the air was rather chill, and sat on the comfortable settee before a marble-topped table. The waiter brought my coffee and liqueur and I could see the night lying undisturbed before me for some little time.

Mr. and Miss Corder had certainly arrived at a most opportune moment in my own history, for their profession and their actual physical appearance were, towards myself, like as many tests upon my speed and endurance. Not only this, but they pricked against what I may term the balloon of my thoughts, damaged it not inconsiderably, and very nearly brought down the whole affair. The heavy weight of sentiment that clung to them made their drag upon me yet more dangerous, until I determined to add them to this part of the book that I was writing and to use their personalities as so much ballast towards the greater security of my own voyage. For I was about to add the concluding chapters to this book when my chance meeting with the brother and sister made me recast the whole shape of the thing

in my mind and it emerged in its final form strengthened by the addition of their two characters.

They walked into the café when I was half-way through a cigarette and sat down at a table just opposite. While they were taking off their coats they saw me, and Corder, without any more hesitation, came over to me.

C. C.: I knew it was you. We felt pretty sure at the Château, and then at Vézelay we had no more doubt about it. Are you alone? May I bring my sister across?

S. S.: Yes! do!

C. C.: Well, Hilda, you see we were right!

H. C.: Yes, Carl, and it's a compliment to his old teachers that he hasn't forgotten us. We haven't set eyes on each other for fifteen years. You haven't changed so much, though.

C. C.: Well, what are you doing here? We're on our annual holiday, come here to sketch, as you know, but somehow this isn't the sort of place I should ever have expected to find you in.

H. C.: I taught for ten years at St. Asaph's and it was the unhappiest time of my life. Then father died, and we had enough money left us to buy a cottage in Cornwall, where we have lived ever since.

C. C.: You can tell him all about that later, Hilda, but first let him explain his presence.

S. S.: I have been writing a book for a year or more, and it has entailed my travelling to these parts, though I am much more at home in Spain or Italy.

H. C.: We know that: I bought "Southern Baroque Art" and Carl read it after me.

C. C.: There's some fine stuff in it. I always say you were our only pupil of talent. But there's

Matthewson. Have you seen his water-colours? He's had more than one exhibition.

H. C.: They wouldn't interest him, dear. If he has seen them he has probably tried to forget them by now.

S. S.: That isn't true. I remember him perfectly. He went on drawing at Eton with Sidney Evans. They sell tremendously, I believe, and he must be quite a rich man. A hundred, even two hundred guineas, a water-colour.

H. C.: Yes. A year's salary for a morning's work. But I envy no one.

C. C.: You won't mind my saying this, but I knew you'd never make a painter.

S. S.: So did I, but anything was worth it that got one off games.

C. C.: Well, you've quite made your name in another direction—as a poet. I could never have taught you that.

S. S.: Neither could anyone else. But perhaps you and Miss Corder got as near to it as anybody could.

H. C.: How compliments are flying! But we must come to ground. How long have you been in these parts?

S. S.: I came from Le Mans three days ago. We've been motoring a hundred and fifty miles a day, and the roads have been none too good. It's terrible between Le Mans and Tours.

C. C.: Le Mans? I've always longed to get there. But surely you don't like it? Of course I don't know the part of the world you've written about, but I realize there are fine things from your book. How were you brought into contact with them?

S. S.: I don't know. I lived in Italy a lot as a child,

in Florence chiefly, but I never went to Naples and Sicily till the year after the war ended. That awful word "Baroque" has haunted my footsteps ever since. It's not my fault; but people like labels, and then they think they've got you safely into a pigeon-hole and needn't worry about you again.

H. C.: Then, why did you write the book? I thought if you liked the Baroque you'd never care for the things here.

S. S.: If anything, I prefer them. But I wanted a subject that hundreds of other writers hadn't sullied, and that I could treat freely in my own manner. They're cheap things down there, perhaps, but in effect they are like popular tunes. When I first got to Naples, and went afterwards down to Apulia, or found towns like Noto and Ragusa in Sicily, I felt like a composer who has suddenly discovered a whole world of new folk-tunes. I could not help writing something round them, and giving them a big symphonic treatment which very likely their merits don't deserve. But they were my own discovery, I was very young then, and so I look back on the whole thing in a romantic spirit, and feel at home there. I have never believed that the only form of good prose is a novel. They are all so many academy pictures now, and there is no good in a poet trying to enter the lists against the hundreds of young female geniuses who are declared every year.

H. C.: But "The Constant Nymph" and "Dusty Answer."

S. S.: Oh, never mind! You'd hate to have to read them in three years' time. Let's leave our contemporaries alone; let their voices be heard now, since they'll never be heard of again. We'll talk about permanencies.

I'm sorry not to have seen Mont St. Michel this time; I remember the drawing of it we used to copy so well, and shall always associate it with you both, on preferably a windy Friday night when I used to wonder how you ever got home across the common.

C. C.: But what are you writing now? What is this book that made it necessary for you to come here?

S. S.: Well, it may seem to you an odd idea, but it's a history of the fair-haired races in Art. One hears so much about the decline of the West, and certainly all our American progeny will produce nothing for centuries to come. It took five hundred years for the Romans to produce an artist, so how long do you think it will be before the Americans can do that?

C. C.: I should think ten thousand.

S. S.: Yes. There you are, you see we agree about that. I think it is time white men asserted themselves again, and by this I don't mean the Italians, and hardly the Spaniards either. They are dark Europeans, and what I am trying to get at is the true fair-haired race and its achievement. But, even out of that, I shall only choose what interests me, and what is useful to my purpose. I can, and shall, leave out all sorts of things. Their cathedrals are the biggest things they did, but what's the use of my writing about Rouen or Amiens? They have become almost sham Gothick from adulation and familiarity. No, the only thing is to find, again in this second instance, some work of theirs that has not been altogether sullied and spoiled. As for that, you're a pretty good danger, both of you, with your sketches.

H. C.: What? Aren't we to be allowed to have our holidays any longer? We must motor round, must we,

with cameras, instead of going slowly, like we do, and appreciating every detail ?

C. C.: Well, he must buy us the motor, Hilda, or we shall be worse off than we were before, walking and taking snapshots. I suppose sketching is awfully antiquated, isn't it ? But no amount of postcards are going to stop me.

S. S.: Oh, I wouldn't have you prevented for anything. You're a much more alive audience to the buildings you sketch than are the people in a concert-hall to the music they are supposed to be hearing. Still, it's a ghoul's work creeping in and out of those old churches.

H. C.: But we are dead ourselves. Are you sure you saw Carl and myself to-day ? You're really sitting alone at your table, thinking of us, because you saw a man and a woman sketching who brought us back into your mind.

S. S.: Draw me something, then, on the marble-table and rub it out with this piece of bread. Bread and charcoal are the sacramental symbols of the studio, and how seldom they're substantiated !

Carl drew a great stag. Its antlers were like a dead tree in an old park, and it had gone again in a moment with the crumbled bread. Miss Corder took the charcoal from him and sketched an upturned boat which was scarcely building before a glass of mineral water was thrown over it by my elbow. The waiter took it away with a damp cloth.

H. C.: If only I was young again, and had my youth before me, unwasted ! I was getting near forty when you last saw me, now I'm fifty-five and more. Carl, who always seemed so young to me, is over fifty. Think of the paradise we might live in. We might travel

about for weeks together, the three of us.

C. C.: We'd go to Spain; it's not much more than a day in the train from here.

S. S.: Yes. I'd lead you round and rub your noses against the old, worn stones.

C. C.: We'd arrive back in our London studio with armfuls, taxi-loads of sketches. When we were young the amateurs were still in their drawing-rooms; in those days it was possible to hire a studio for other purposes than jazz on a gramophone. Well, let's think we had a future in the past. I can't promise anything in the present. And yet it must be a present with all to-day's conveniences. We must be allowed to motor, and not have to ride on mule or donkey-back.

S. S.: What about the char-à-banc I saw you in this evening! Isn't that nearly as bad?

H. C.: It's no worse than third-class on the railway. Now it's a world of omnibuses, third-class carriages, cinemas, Virginia cigarettes; let's get out of it as quickly as we can!

S. S.: Don't worry. You'll be back there the moment I stop thinking of you.

C. C.: Then where are we? Are we here in this café, or aren't we?

S. S.: Didn't I see you this morning at the Château d'O, and this afternoon at Vézelay? Do you deny that?

C. C.: You're the best judge. Didn't I draw a stag for you on the table?

S. S.: Yes. And where is it now? Be careful!

I was alone again, and I had been right in thinking that the night lay undisturbed before me. It had been a lovely and wonderful day; a castle, a ruined abbey,

and an orchard of apple-trees to walk in while their beauty made a loom for all the poetry the mind could conjure out of their loaded boughs. We were under the same roof and if they were not there in their flesh they were certainly with me none the less. There had been an indestructible romance about every leaf and every sip of air in the whole day. It made me remember the first things I had ever seen that possessed beauty, but were I to write down their names I might nearly cry. I had come back very near to them.

So I went into the apple-trees and saw the dim ground starred with a myriad flowers. They clogged the feet and broke like a spring-tide against the stems. It was a young, a very young cabinet that lay locked and hidden there, ready for its doors to open. When this arrived, the whole world was still and obedient for them. The hermits in the wood found the key to this secret, and for a long time they, and they only, had the use of this knowledge. Yet it was no stored wisdom of the past, but a comb of present and vital honey pressed out of these flowers and with no scent or sweetness that did not come from them.

There has never been so vast and anonymous a beauty. In its violence of birth it could afford to throw away great efforts and great pangs of labour. Many of its supreme struggles have been vain. It may be doubted whether one single cathedral has proved an unmitigated success. Such undertakings were so enormous that their completion required the life-work of several generations, and the skill and fire have diminished down these degrees to a patient and uninspired close. Also, the centre of a town is never so safe a soil for experiment as some monastic oasis in a smiling wilderness. There, no

hindrance has come to these long, deep breaths of intoxication and the clear air and clean winds have added another strength to their potency.

The whole movement may be compared to an inspired outburst of free-formed poetry; where it has fallen into good moulds the molten metal has run into pure and unbroken shapes, in other places a cracked and too emphatic failure has been the result. It is not necessary for admiration to be indiscriminate where there are so many things to choose among. There is no need to stoop for fruit that has been fanged by the wasp, a symbol for the public in its stinging and destructive waste. We may let them burrow where they will, blind to the good.

They knew no past save that of their own memories. The heroes and the gods of Greece and Rome, in ignorance of their nakedness, they were not able to clothe in anything save their own similitude. A suit of old armour was as a Pharaoh's tomb to them; its little differences to their own were the ripples and the rilled shells of time, a great and unknown sea with no gods upon its glaucous fields and nothing but a wintry terror to its name. Nowhere to the north of Provence was there an antiquity or its monuments, and so they filled the hills and valleys with a race of legends, making themselves into the progeny of these giants and excusing their few relics by crediting them with an overabundant energy and a life of chivalry that left no time for anything beyond its own punctilious observance.

In the centuries when a river could not be forded, or a bridge ridden across, by any knight who would not accept the challenge of the champion on the other side, it is impossible not to feel a more sincere admiration for

the priest or monk who could cross with impunity, thanks to the credulity that he served. The church was the only sanctuary for those not prepared to give, and to receive, hard knocks. Its activities had thus a double energy behind them, for they both believed in the superstition they were extolling, and tried to dramatize its supernatural quality so as to build themselves a more secure shelter in its shade.

Let us try to examine their satisfaction and the manner in which they achieved it.

We have seen their castles, bundles of towers, at any strategic position and have described the armoured castellans and the flat-sided women who lived in that dark and windowless confinement. We must live for a little time longer like parasites upon their vitality and try to analyse the pleasures and distastes in their blood. For a woman to possess great beauty in their eyes she must bear the true warrants of her birth in pale skin and aquiline prominence of nose and cheek-bones. "Cuteness" and "sex-appeal" as now practised in the United States over the counter and in the chorus, would have advanced her no further at that time than the dairy-door. Very long legs, straight sides, and a perpetual pregnancy had to go with this fair skin and straight hair. In clothes, they aimed at producing shapes beautiful in themselves, for it is difficult to believe that there was any sex-stimulus in the fantastic heights of fashion that they reached.

These points of physical admiration are important because their fulfilment was a guarantee of heredity, and owing to the risk of death in battle, tournament, or crusade, the hereditary principle had to be vehemently insisted upon. The barons had to accentuate and sanc-

tify their caste, and this was made easier for them by their difference in appearance and in speech from their serfs, or from the citizens in the towns. Court French was an international language that they shared with the peers in foreign countries, and it was as useful to them as Latin to the mediaeval church. Their pride was kept at a perpetual state of alertness by the world of heraldry in which they moved, and by the bardic records of violence and fidelity that were read to them and had been composed about their forbears. It was an age that bristled with opportunity and coincidence, for an excuse could be made, or a parallel be found, to the wildest feat that these intoxications might inspire. Women played a large share in such incitements to danger, and without their support half the achievement of the age would have been left undone. Strength and bravery they admired in men more than good looks, manners, or learning; and from this they took their delight.

Terror and exaltation were the two poles of their emotion, and they give a very different diameter of feeling to the clogged or sprightly interplay of fine eating, fine talking, and ironic or delicate music. In the eighteenth century mountains and forests were horrid; Mozart would faint at the sound of a trumpet; there were no moustaches except with cavalry officers and Jews; drawing-room editions were printed; few beauties of the mediaeval age would have found a husband, and, conversely, not one of the fops or wits have gained a wife. Between their states of terror and exaltation there were but a few degrees of happy boredom and contented dullness; and, on either side of these, exaltation and terror approached each other so nearly as to be indistinguishable. To get their effects, architecture and

sculpture had worked themselves into the most perfect instruments of panic and rhapsody. But these were qualities that men and women never sought for in their own homes, where embroidery and tapestries were the only decoration; and so they associated these two ends of passion with nothing else except religion.

A huge race of celibates lived in their midst to pander to these two emotions. All that side of life which they imprisoned in themselves flooded up within them and broke into these new channels. Their austerity and privation reinforced its strength, and where the more fervent and primitive emotions failed a kind of spiritual as well as physical onanism contorted the imagination into strange flowerings of art. The men and women celibates were two more sexes over and above the procreative and accustomed pair, and the world of human beings doubled its own forms and was richer by this multiplication. There is a similar and even wider process going on in the big cities of the world at this present age, and it is possible to conceive that if their growth of population goes on unhampered for some century or more into the future there will be many more than just the two established sexes. No doctor could deny that these changes are already taking place in the great German cities, and what may be true now of Hamburg, or Berlin, had its parallel in the classical world with the later Alexandria, or with the Rome of Nero and Petronius.

The velocity implicit in such changes of direction can be wasted in a vulgar dissipation, or else it can flow into such extraordinary shapes as those by which all Western Europeans are surrounded. The bleakest Scotch moorland, the blackest and foulest slum in Sheffield, the most

chic French watering-place, the bloodiest bullring in Spain, none of these can hide themselves many miles away from such evidences of the past. Whether lying in ruins, or still in use and smelling of incense, or of hymn books, this is our past before we gave birth to the new world of America.

In a sense, there are almost no other buildings. No one with trained eyes can see much more than the poetry of desolation in the dead temples of Girgenti, or Paestum. When new, they were dolls' houses, built by children, and brightly and badly painted by children. Roman remains are worse because they lack any naïveté that the Greeks possessed and because they had become brutalized by conquest. The dying gladiators vitiated an audience which had become urban far too quickly. After this we arrive at Byzantium, and the false enthusiasms of the dilettante have exaggerated the beautiful mosaics of Ravenna and Cefalu, and their one splendid church, St. Sofia, until the Byzantine age has been established as the greatest time of European art.

Outside and beyond this there is nothing, or nearly nothing. The filigree courts of the Alhambra have the beauty of fringed tents, or of coffered chests, but they have no more pretence than this to architecture. The pavilions of Japan and China are a diminishment even of this Arabian profession. So there is nothing but a mosque or two in Cairo, and the Taj Mahal, that Italian bastard born to the Indian lotus-pools. This has a poetry of situation and colour which hides its full-blown shape and the tired and expensive finish to its detail. The deserted city of Fatehpur-sikri, not far from Agra, and its mosques and palaces of red sandstone, may be more beautiful and finer work than this, but it is all;

and, indeed, if Cairo is allowed to be in a Mediterranean land and not in Africa, it may be said that the Moghul buildings are the only things out of Europe and the Mediterranean basin. They are far away and pleasant, lying in opaque tides of moonlight, or under a copper sun that beats down any eyes that are raised towards their domes. In fact, the Moghul palaces and mosques are loud in their excuses, and their delicacy has won them a considerate treatment that will not allow too close an inquiry to be made of their condition.(1)

Half their loveliness was a harem secret, only seen by the women, by one man, and by a crowd of eunuchs. It was of a much more selfish variety, then, than that of a cathedral; and even a little more selfish than that of some great monastery, where at least the church and cloister could be seen. As well as this, the fact that all carved detail had to be abstract, and that painting or carving the figures of men or animals was forbidden, made their world of beauty into a blind pattern, and turned their thoughts and their poetry into extolling nothing but the things they were forbidden to touch in the other arts. Poetry became an aphrodisiac, occupied merely with the limbs and the machinery of love; it could never advance out of this into being a literature. Their buildings were sporadic in origin and in life; what one Emperor, or Shah, built, his son and successor pulled down, or more certainly neglected. Their mosques had no service, no ritual, and no music. There were no vestments, and no priests to wear them; no splendid sacristies and chapter-halls; no sculptured tombs of knights or ladies; no carved stalls, glass windows, or tales of heraldry.

In the Eastern kingdoms there was never anyone but

the ruler ; there were no nobles, and even a rich merchant was forced to hide and conceal his wealth as much as possible, while that part of it which he dared to spend went on the most temporary forms of decoration and did not proceed to further lengths than embroidered shifts, or silks shot with gold. The thousand years of Musulman power that began with the conquests of Mahomet's generals and ended with the gradual decline of the Turks produced, indeed, a beauty of stuffs, and little more than that. Its other aspects have benefited by a wild exaggeration produced from the external magnificence of royal processions, and from the romantically shuttered palaces into which no foreigner could penetrate. In literature, and in architecture, neither Persia, Egypt, nor the Moghul Empire are of greater importance than so small a country as Portugal. The art, as well as the wealth and the wisdom of this particular East, are a historical delusion.

Instead of this one vicarious East, Europe has had a number of permanent Wests, whose romantic value, being ourselves Europeans, we are unable to appreciate. England, France, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Flanders, Holland, Florence, Rome, Venice, Naples, these are the most easily identified of this constellation in whose path we are still following. In all this, there have been two main agencies : the Italian, and the tall fair-haired man whom this book has been written to extol. The older sort of European, responsible for the classical world of antiquity, for the Roman church, for the Renaissance, and for the cultural developments which came out of the Renaissance, we can see thousands of times over in the flesh, and in pictures, but this type has been best portrayed and fixed ethnographically in the portraits of El Greco,

and in, for instance, the crowd of Spanish nobles who stand at the " Burial of Count Orgaz."

A particular trait of race in them is the eloquence of their hands, they speak as much with their fingers as with their tongues. They are small in stature and eloquent of speech, their impetuosity carries them far, but they have no retreat and little stamina. They flew with a strange fury, out of the Gothick that they never understood and could not practise with any conviction, into the Renaissance, building this theatre where they staged their own past in an incredibly short space of time, as though it was meant to be of scarcely greater permanence than a painted scenery. By the time laborious execution, which comes behind inspiration, had caught up with them, their conception had changed its form and flowed into broken and hysterical shapes that sought to frighten, to astonish, or to amuse.

The twelfth century left its monuments in every country of Europe, while the High Renaissance before it died in Tuscany and came into a heavier and more gaudy life in Venice, produced few buildings, but each of them was a masterpiece. The palaces at Urbino and Mantua, the Temple of the Malatesta at Rimini, later on the library of Sansovino and the villas of Palladio, these are the achievements of the revival and they were inhabited by the highest type of European and probably the finest human type there has yet been. None of those Eastern races who live in an architecture of pavilions and have not yet learnt to use a chair* can afford even the weakest and most humble comparison with an Italian of the sixteenth century. But this is not the place to attempt an investigation into the paradise where the

* This is surely an important criterion by which to judge the human race.

mind of this man liked to walk. We must leave him here as one of the two instruments of the West until the moment comes to approach him again when we discuss the influence of the fair-haired race upon his conceptions of poetry and beauty.

We are back again in those two states of terror and exaltation, of panic and of rhapsody, which we described as being the poles of emotion for the Northern race. But behind these powers of superstition there were the secular and military emotions. These had a kind of genealogical sanctity, being a series of affirmations that it was unwise and dangerous to contradict.

The man sitting on the outside of the bus reading the football news in his evening paper sees the whole country in terms of the different teams. Each big town is not much more in his mind than factory smoke, a noisy street, and the footballers paid, or unpaid, champions of the crowd. The armoured figure of the knight saw the world in rather similar terms through his raised visor. He may have seen with his own eyes as many castles as there are mushrooms in a field ; further on, just out of sight as it were, there were numberless others, of which he knew the names and no more. In certain definite directions he may have travelled great distances in a crusade or on pilgrimage, but everything out of sight lay in a thick mist of improbability, and all he knew was that just the same institutions of religious and secular power held sway as far as the shores of the sea, on the further side of which, with the Saracens, or in Africa, something very different might be reasonably expected. The football-lover's world of sport is closely paralleled in the ring of chivalry and elaborate fair-play by which the knight knew that he was surrounded. If on his

travels, his presence would be made welcome at any tournament held near his path, and the superstition and credulity of those centuries are well illustrated when it is realized that sudden advents of this nature were the only kind of arrival possible since it was not practicable to send messages more than a very few hours in advance of your coming.

If there was a tournament in the green meadows below the castle the news might be brought that an English knight and his retinue were but an hour's ride away, making for the lists. There was no other criterion upon his importance than the value of his armour, but these elaborate and dangerous games of chivalry could give a quick estimate of his other qualities and this mimic battlefield was a veritable drawing-room of deportment and demeanour. They were quick judges of his faults and strengths, and the horse he rode they considered almost as part of himself, putting down its faults as much to his disadvantage as they allowed its good points to his credit.

After it was over he would be entertained in the castle for a few days, and then rode away never to hear of his friends again. He could not write and had soon forgotten the correct pronunciation of their name, but he knew that their exact copies in hospitality, in situation, and even in physical appearance, were to be found over half the known world, keeping the peasants in subjection, or perhaps guarding some fanciful battlements against the Moors. The only change was in the landscape where these castles stood, and in the different peasantries who were their serfs.

Some of the castles were on cliffs above the sea, others in a border-land of marshes, on a rock at the bend of a

river, in the clearing of a forest, on a small hill rising from the middle of a village, at the most difficult curve of a mountain-pass, anywhere that profit and defence could be made from their position.

Different schools of military engineers designed their capricious forms. The divisions of this military architecture include the castles of the Welsh marshes; the Spanish castles, of marked and peculiar style, built as a defence against the Moorish cavalry; the castles of the Teutonic Order in the Polish marshes built to keep off the Tartars and convert the Lithuanians, the last pagan race in Europe; the Norman castles of Sicily and Southern Italy; the castles in the Peloponnese; and the fortresses that the Crusaders erected in the Holy Land, and in the Latin Principalities that they set up in Asia Minor.

All these are garrison castles, held by a permanent force of soldiers, and they are the supreme expression of a violent age, with below them the countless feudal towers and private family fortresses of each country. But the race who inhabited the castles in these different lands was the same, and they were as much strangers to their environment as are the English in India. If all the countries of Europe in which they established themselves are thought of as a whole the general situation is much like that of India, where the differences of innumerable languages and the hatred of one peasantry for another have achieved the permanent establishment of the white man, though his number compared to theirs is about one in six hundred.

There are half a million English, men and women, among over three hundred million Indians; and the ratio of the Normans to the populations that they conquered can have been no greater than this.

Their alert and martial architecture adapted and gave strength to the elegancies of the Ile de France, while to the other side of this was the equally strong and massive Burgundian style which came from Cluny and Cîteaux and directed great monastic building activities all over Europe. In this way a most extraordinary body of energy was assembled and put into operation, and within two or three generations, before it came into its own decadence, the Norman race and the other races into which it had bred, all of whom constituted the fair-haired man, had nearly achieved a unity of Europe which has existed at no other time save under the Caesars. They even took Constantinople, and nothing save their quarrellings could have made their conquests impermanent. But too many of these proud champions had separate ambitions of their own, and this brought the collapse of the whole movement and turned it into the smaller European history of two or three kingdoms. The developments of the imagination and of art were lost to the Northern races and became the property of some two or three Italian mercantile states ; while that great building activity lost its strength in continual wars and expended its last energies on a few separate technical masterpieces where delicacy of detail and fineness of invention were the object.

The strong emotional power that the mediaeval builders put into their works can be easily understood when it is taken into consideration that there were so few drags upon their inspiration, and that the necessary concentration of mind was not continually wasted upon needless excitements. News was something entirely lacking in their lives. There were no newspapers, and nearly no books ; there being about as many people in

the country who could read as there are persons who can understand Russian in this kingdom at the present day.

"News," books, music, the theatre, any sight of things drawn, except in the rude frescoes of a church and an inn, or in the finer and microscopic ornaments of an illuminated book, all of these were things wanting in their lives. These intoxicants and drugs were lacking in their sedative as well as their excitant properties, so that their state of mind and nerves was of a more perfect normality than it has been easy to attain since these various inventions have come into an universal practice. It was an early morning of the senses with a cold and energetic freshness, clear and brilliant light, and no need to go further than the wild-flowers in the fields for images of poetry or motives of ornament.

Red campion and blue Canterbury-bell, fox-glove and gold-flecked strawberry, these became the properties of an age which had never heard of acanthus, myrtle, or asphodel. The campion was an alert sentinel on the path to the nettle-bed; the Canterbury-bell blew its faint scent like a far sound from the holy towers; the fox-glove let fall his painted gloves for fairy hands to try and hoped to hold them prisoner in this pomander that was more stern than any fetter; the strawberry had baited his sweet, red flesh with some golden straws to catch the birds, and he trusted his propagation to their quick beaks under the strawberry net and their safe flight home to the thick boughs.

The stone-wall of the garden had a steep and ridged coping heavy with lichen, its slanted depth was meant as an awning to the fruit trees catching the sun below. There were more fruit trees standing by themselves in the ground and hung as heavily with fruit or blossom,

according to the month, as the great candlestick in the cathedral has lights to its branches, or smoke of incense hiding its lit boughs. A pair of magpies perched on the cloud of blossom and then were gone, leaving an image on the eyes of their raven heads, white shifts, and tails like a crinoline or a parachute, carefully arranged to steady their low and deliberate flight through the trees and over the wall's sharp edge.

Flowers were like little faces to look into. Pansies had downy cheeks and soft eyes; periwinkles were no more than blue eyes in themselves and of the sort that go with a pretty innocence and a protection of straw hair easily kindled into love; violets had no beauty in themselves but only with their sisters when the appeal they made was that of a town on a holiday, or a wood live with sunbeams. There were snapdragons guarding these lowly things with their sleepy fires, and their jaws were old traps closed tight in the heat; near by were the rose bushes, holding back their beauty with the pathetic spears that are their only protection against the hand. All of these flowers were single, and they were thin and fine to focus, strengthening the impression that this was an early morning of cold and energetic freshness, clear and brilliant light.

All the while, something was going on, the flowers were nearly audible. Smoke climbed straight into the sky at several points over the wall. There were doves crooning in some tall elms, and then with a sudden break, and after that into eternity, a cuckoo sounded quite near out of some secret window in the trees. The cuckoo and the turtle-dove were the soft and strange discords in this place where everything else was related and but a unit in a great entirety. They were foreign to this little perfec-

tion and gave the only hint of any other world than this. They breathed jasmine and clove upon these simpler scents.

Far off, and so distant as to be in another world, shapes of jasmine and of clove walked in other gardens by a rill of water from the hills, or lay in a pavilion where their jasmine skin made the marbles cool. They swam in deep water and made two worlds of poetry with their lotus curves and petal limbs, climbing out of that glass matrix into two strange and pagan antiquities. A naked and double mythology built itself out of their beauty and resolved itself into these new scents, strange and strong above the violet and the rose. The eyes had burnt themselves out of their blue purity into black and velvet coals of fire ; the golden hair of the north had turned to gloss like the raven's wing ; the limbs and body, while they kept their thinness, had lost their pale tone and gone into dark and spiced smoothness, or into the lacquered gold of the jasmine. The mouth had a hotter fire out of these spices and this burnished smoothness, and the shoulders were rounded into two arches, two pavilions. The sharp mornings had changed into long afternoons dawdled in these shades of marble. But the turtle-dove and the cuckoo had settled on the trees, and their notes sounded just the same message of strangeness and difference to the languor below.

They were out of sight, hidden in the branches, but the warm contentment of the one, and that double-note of warning of the other, gave the alarm of something far away and alien to these slow courts of shade.

Clove and jasmine died before the eyes, and the voices of these birds snuffed out their scent as quickly as a candle-flame. They went into the darkness of which they were

part, lying at the back of night so far into its depth that they were near the day at the other side of that wood of flowering trees, and they lived in a twilight made from its blossom that powdered the whole air with lit, but faint, boughs.

Instead, long twists of smoke rose into the sky, and the dove and the cuckoo were in the elms. At one point, a great grey back like a whale showed high above the wall and towered right up, dwarfing the tall trees. It was held in position, tied down as it were, by a fiery pattern of stays and ropes that had settled themselves into a fine and delicate beauty of strength. Far even above its pinnacles the thin, tented roof sloped up into a knife-edge that flowered perilously with what might be the weeds and sea-fronds gathered by that sharp keel. It was nearly impossible that this huge thing should for ever hold to its moorings, and even on such a calm day as this there might be no wind if you stood right in its shadow, or moved entirely away from it into the fields, but if you moved out of the safety of its sides just a step beyond its shade so as to be free of those giant walls, immediately a violent wind blew round its edges, of the buffeting sort that a harbour-wall has to fight against.

The front of the whole thing was recessed and worked like the poop of an immense galleon as though designed for swiftness and safe balance, and high up in the centre of it was something which changed from a wide-open rose into a huge and ominous wheel, and then altered again into a series of sails, furled and rolled, but ready to open at the wind's provocation. Later on in the evening this wind blowing out of the sunset would increase in force. The western fire caught the spaces between the spokes of the wheel, so that the petals of

that huge rose had burnished leaves to protect them, and the sails, not yet stretched to their full height, strained and raced at their ropes. All was ready, and as the low clouds coming down for the night began to close round, some among them passed quite close and low above its roof, and this huge stone thing in its stillness, just about to move, contrasted with their steady speed as they went to their posts in the darkness, and began, itself, to move out into the night.

But this was not yet; just now it lay at anchor tied down by the stays and ropes that we described and showing its grey, whale back above the wall. Everything in this new world was strange; things had begun their fresh formations under no hint of what there had been before. The castle, standing out of its moat, showed again in that brackish water; and there were two castles, joined together in their foundations, and riding on an even keel in that choked river where water only stood and never flowed. The garden was walled on three sides, on the fourth it was open to the moat and edged by it so that the castle in its new chalk whiteness climbed straight out of the pansies and violets into the high air. A wooden bridge, looking like a ship's gangway, or part of the castle's fortifications in its new and grained material, crossed over the moat and led into the garden. Looking up at the castle walls there seemed something bare and blind about their surface, and this was due to the windows which had no glass, so that they were either wide open, or closed and sealed with wooden shutters. There were no panes for the light to catch, and none of those shields to throw back the sun. The windows had lintels like old and worn eyebrows above them, and there was no decoration anywhere until the eyes got as

high as the roof, where pinnacles and turrets made the bravest show possible, and there was a riot of unnecessary elongation and capricious crocketing. Up there it was supposed to be safe, and it was the part of the castle which had the most permanent value for decoration as it could be seen furthest away. Indeed, down the sloping cornfields, the black caps to the towers rose straight out of the harvest and suggested that a band of witches was hidden in the corn.

Higher in the fields, the towers rose very tall, and now their huge white mass, or bundle, stood inexplicably against the cloudless sky, giving a peculiar sense of power and force, for there seemed to be nothing strong enough for their weight to stand upon and they, again, must climb out of the trodden barley. Then, at last, upon the brow of the hill the moat could be seen, and the towers floated lily-like on its green surface.

Everything within sight had this clean, new appearance. The flowers were sharp and delicate enough in colour to make the most lasting dyes, and indeed gold might have been extracted from a bed of tall sun-flowers that were growing in an exposed place where they could get all the heat and light possible. These must be the colours in which the castle-dwellers made their clothes.

It was a reign of hyperbolic fashion. Rich young men wore their cloaks and sleeves cut like the sharp edging of a leaf or a fish's transparent fin. They were proud of their legs, and liked to illustrate their pride by showing each leg in different coloured hose as though offering a choice to the cloister-skirted maidens. Hats were of fur or of cloth with some news of a turban in their folds. The hats of the women were by contrast of a much greater elaboration, as though atoning in this for the

uncompetitive simplicity of their skirts and bodices, which avoided any comparison with the fantastic clothing of the men. No prophecy of the aeroplane was too unlikely for the forms of their headwear, and in extreme instances it compromised between the aeroplane and the fullest rigged sailing-vessel. This mass of white planes and contours was designed to show off the rounded elongation of the face and the tinted cheeks that they admired, and often its folds were continued below the chin so as to draw the fullest profit from this framing for the face. Consciously, or without this guile, the domestic animals that walked with them were calculated still further to enhance those peculiarities of appearance. Small, curled dogs, not much bigger than a Pekinese, contrasted their inextricable confusion of curls with the straight lines of dress; and, on the other hand, fine greyhounds drew attention by slight parody to the physical and fashionable angularity of their owners. Gerhawks and falcons riding on the wrist were as aquiline as anything could be, and the slender ankles of the horses gave a further reinforcement to these ideals. For the battle, or in the lists, the knights rode a heavy horse, the ancestor of the present cart-horse, and its stamping clumsiness added another contrast to their plated armour, beaked helmets, and the thin, small men who climbed out of these husks as soon as opportunity would allow.

The vertical was an obsession of their minds, for they believed every blessing came straight from heaven and every trouble climbed directly out of hell. Where it was necessary to refine, or excuse, this dogmatic direction they at any rate made the steepest approximation possible. What they admired was height, in human beings as in everything else; the height of a castle or church was

their preoccupation and they would only embark upon construction over a large area when they knew that this was necessary to support the thrust of immensely high walls. Other dimensional values were of much minor importance in their minds; and for largeness in its vulgar and plutocratic display they had little feeling, and have left few examples.

Fair hair was an inalienable prerogative of their caste, and it had an almost hieratic importance in their art. It was dwelt upon with insistence at every opportunity. Fair-haired men and women are as much a part of tapestry as are skins of saffron and of jasmine of Chinese painting; for until the Latin reconquest of the imagination their achievement in tapestry far excelled anything that they accomplished in painting. It was the true art of the North and none but Flemings or Northern French have ever understood it, while its extreme costliness of production destined it only for the castles of the very richest nobles who were sure, in themselves, to be possessed of this attribute. It added yet another genealogical flattery to their pride, for they saw themselves strictly echoed in every attack upon the ideal.

They passed their lives in a dense forest of legend where the antiquity was all contemporary, indeed it may be suspected that "old clothes" were hateful, and indeed haunted, to their minds, and that the placing of legendary figures in contemporary dress was not only a necessity from ignorance but the result, as well, of a refusal on their part to see beauty in anything but the height of fashion. The utmost degree of prolixity and elaboration was practised, and indeed expected, so that the figures on the wall might well be guests staying in the castle for some great event like a wedding, and they

could have joined their hosts at the table without any difficulties of convention. Besides this, the eyes were not trained, as they have been in the last two present generations, to an ordinary commercial drawing of the figure as seen in posters and advertisements, and still less to the comfortable and suburban-home ideals of the Royal Academy; so that elongations of the figure, overcrowding of the composition, improbable richness of dress, and the fact that often a story is told in successive stages going on within an inch of each other, none of these things disturbed their appreciation, or let them think they were in a position to dictate their ideas to the artist.

The ever present poetry of sunny days, blossoming trees, indeed the ordinary lyrical properties that are eternal and unchangeable, were reinforced by the materials of the epic. They had fought to establish themselves in their new lands, and now, having mingled their blood with that of the earlier Northern wave of invasion which had built up its dominion, they tacked on its ancestry to their own and added Charlemagne and his paladins to their roll of heroes. Every invasion of fair-haired men from the North was made use of, and they armed themselves as widely as possible out of that uncertain past. King Arthur and his Knights, Charlemagne and his Twelve Paladins, the Visigothick heroes of Spain, the old Teutonic legends, this was their Trojan age of romance. Later on, such was the inspiration of this poetry, they put its ideals into a practical experiment and embarked upon two centuries of dangerous but sanctified romance. The gods and heroes of Greece and Rome were scarcely present in their cosmogony, for its extent was almost overstocked with their own property.

Perhaps the Franks, and its adjective Frankish, are the

truest and most accurate terms to apply to this civilization of the fair-haired races, for it applies to all their different branches and covers their Eastern as well as their Western activities. French was its language, Paris its centre of learning and fashion, and the district round Paris the experimental soil of its peculiar architectural style ; but all its ideals were carried out and propagated chiefly by the Normans, and secondly by the Angevins. They were the instruments of its inventions and discoveries.

If we called a great parliament, or a council for a crusade, these knights, between whose races and language there would be so little difference, would discuss and complain among themselves of their serfs in a polite and fashionably refined French. Their appearance, their dress, and not only their language, would tally ; and the illusion given would be that of an united and unanimous race of conquerors who had imposed themselves upon a hundred subordinate types of men.

The barons from England could instance the sandy-haired Scots, with their bare knees, Roman kilts, and broadswords ; the dark, guttural Welsh ; the gabbling, barefoot Irish in their blue cloaks. All these were lands of mountains and lakes. The great castles of the Welsh marshes were built for Edward I by the architect, Henry de Elreton. Their purpose was to keep the Welsh in check and to hold the coasts for his armies embarking for Ireland. Beaumaris, Carnarvon and Conway are all works of this one engineer, and they were outposts of the Normans into a wild and barbaric race that produced a huge output of poetry and preserved a prouder genealogical roll of their chiefs and petty princes than any other European country can show.

It was especially Ireland which was a difficulty. The red-haired men, but many of them were dark and Milesian in their origin, had an unheard-of vitality. Their monks wore habits of tweed that were dyed with seaweed and the sea-shells of the bare coast, and they chose the most inaccessible rocks of the Atlantic for their hermitages. The unreal greenland flowered into a myriad white tents, and the minstrels and poets gathered at Tara, each with the sept he belonged to. From the blue hills of morning till the blue hills of night there was a perpetual challenge of poetry, and warlike or lyrical measures were sung to the appropriate harp, chronicling a beauty which is lost and forgotten to us. There was a Spanish pride attaching to these ceremonies, and the poorest beggar bore the proud name of his chief and claimed relationship with him. These were inflammatory occasions, and the mail-clad Normans would raid down upon them and interrupt the dangerous poetics, getting back as quickly as they could to their stone forts.

There was the same trouble with the Bretons, whose rocky corner of the earth was the cradle of the Arthurian cycle. Their language was uncouth and hard to understand ; they were not yet properly cured of their Druidical worship and were in dangerous communion with their Celtic relations in the English west. But they were fanatic in what they had assumed of Christianity, and were already building sombre and exuberant churches of a greenish granitic stone that spoke of the iron-bound Atlantic coast and the long, roaring waves that broke their lives upon it.

Far to the east of this there were worse dangers with a still pagan population, and the Tartar hordes riding nearer and nearer over the horizon. Against these

perils the very strongest defences were necessary, and at Marienburg, on the Vistula, the Teutonic Knights had built themselves a fortress using every resource of mediaeval art to make it impregnable. It was constructed of red bricks in the peculiar style only met with along the shores of the Baltic, and had three vaulted storeys, the cellar, the ground-floor, and the dwelling of the Master of the Order, above. The Chapter-house, a huge hall with a fan-vaulted roof, was supported on a single giant pillar of granite, and every detail to do with this militant abbey was of stern and martial simplicity. The church looked as though it was in a state of siege, and the bastions and ramparts of the fortifications outside gave an impression that there was no peace, and never any prospect of a day not passed in armour. These jangling martinets, with their beards flowing out over their robes, had a campaign of more than fifty years in front of them before they could subdue the pagan and Slavonic Prussians; and, at last, after nearly a century and a half of continual warfare, they were forced to surrender their monastery to the shaven-headed, long-moustached Poles. The Teutonic Knights form one of the strangest and most uncouth chapters in Gothick history, and their distance from France was such as to make it a safe statement that not one of their number could have understood that language of civilization, but, none the less, they represent a part of this universal chivalry, and so they cannot be omitted from any account of its different facets.

There were French Knights in Hungary who had gone there in the train of the Angevin, King Robert of Anjou. Fifty years earlier, in 1266, Charles I of Anjou, his grandfather, had gained possession of Naples and

Sicily. These three countries had their complement of Frenchmen, and in the case of Hungary it has already been mentioned in the course of this book that two famous French architects Martin Ragevy and Villard de Honnecourt built cathedrals at Kaschau on the slope of the Tokay mountains, and in the most distant parts of that country. It is the second of these two architects, whose sketch-book, a unique architectural document and the only one of its period in existence, is preserved in the Louvre. The most competent among contemporary minds were at work in that corner of Europe, but Hungary was a country of immense wealth able to employ the most expensive craftsmen of the time. The Angevin King Louis of Hungary ruled over Poland as well, and, for a time, Naples, after the murder of his brother, Robert the Wise, by Queen Joanna.

There was an even greater building activity at Naples under the Angevin Kings. That magnificently bastioned fortress, the Castel Nuovo, was begun by Charles I of Anjou from the designs of Pierre d'Angicourt, and the churches of San Giovanni a Carbonara and Santa Chiara contain the magnificent tombs of the Angevin family. In the church of San Lorenzo there is a picture by Simone Martini of the coronation of King Robert the Wise by St. Louis of Toulouse, and the King is shown with the red hair and beard that two centuries of Hohenstaufen rule, followed by this fresh invasion of Angevins from the North, must have made part of the inherited physique of the ruling class in Southern Italy and Sicily. Indeed, their perpetual ascendancy was nearly established; and if it has died out in Naples, and if one half of it has been diminished in Sicily by the massacre of the French Angevin Knights in the Sicilian Vespers,

the taint of their Norman conquest is still most visible in the blood of that island. The Normans had wide feudal powers and great possessions, and their castles round the slopes of Mount Etna have never yet been studied with the detail that their importance demands, while the cathedrals of Messina, Monreale, and Cefalu are, as regards their exteriors, of undeniable if peculiar Norman architecture.

We can deduce, then, from these last two paragraphs three more types of the Norman, or French, pioneer. One of them would bring rumour of the Tartars, and of a still more dangerous foe, the Turk; both the others had their castles near to an active volcano, a symbol that they had arrived in landscapes very different from the green meadows and chalk cliffs whence they had sailed. At Naples, they were in the only city of Europe, save Constantinople, where a great population had continually existed since classical times; and in those alleys of beggars and cripples, painters and sculptors from Florence and Northern Italy worked for them in an appropriate French style that they could not really understand, but which was the nearest approximation possible to the fashionable Gothick of the time. In Sicily, the Normans came into contact with a strange maze of races composed of Italian, Greek, Byzantine, African, and Arab, and the weakness inherent in this mixture made the most pliable material for their rule. Out of all these, their preference, if it was a case for employing craftsmen, was undoubtedly for the Arabs, and there is, consequently, a breath of the honeycomb and the stalactite hanging about the Sicilian vaults and arches. The coronation robes of the Holy Roman Empire, now to be seen in Vienna, and in reality Sicilian

work of the twelfth century made for the Norman Kings, will give an idea of the extent to which Arabian motives invaded this new colony of the North. On their arrival in Sicily their number must have been extremely small, and it may be considered doubtful if anything like a hundred families of Normans achieved the conquest. But their administrative as well as their military genius led to the instant arrangement into order of this new dominion, and where there had been no organization for so long the skeleton dispositions that a few Normans could accomplish established peace in the island for some centuries to come.

Lastly, Syria and Palestine were the classic land of fortification and castle building. The energies of the whole of Western Europe were engaged here over two or three generations and the purest air of romance lay over everything concerned with these incessant campaigns. The castles were called by names taken from the Arthurian cycle and from the whole literature of chivalry. The walls of Mirabel, Beauvoir, Belfort, Nigraguarda, and Blanchgarde rose up in their strength near castles with such names as Toron and Scandalion.(2) This choice of titles may give some idea of the spirit in which the Crusaders left their homes and established themselves in the Holy East.

The purpose in pointing to all these differences has been to try and establish the essentially cosmopolitan nature of the various regimes set up by these invaders from the North. For some six or seven centuries there had been nothing of the kind, and since the last Roman Emperors fled into the marshes of Ravenna there had been no civilization like this one, equipped as had been the Roman, with a governmental as well as a military

genius. We will move for a time in that hot land near the castles with those names of romance. We have to think of them, not only in their actuality, but also in the ideal landscape that their name suggests. There has never been, before or since in history, anything at all like the physical and mental atmosphere of that age. It represented concrete and realized ambition on a scale that has no precedent. Life had turned into poetry, and poetry of the most martial and alert beauty. It had changed into a vigorous paradise that made it worth while to run its dangers as well as enjoy its pleasures. The scenes of chivalry that were the background of their minds sprang into life, and it was as miraculous and incredible as if the wildest theatrical ideals of music and scenery had become a permanent existence affecting everyone who had ever suffered such dreams. The risks and hardships attached to it were no greater or more serious than would be the contrast between that amazing fulfilment of possibility and its hours off-duty; just, indeed, the moving away from that heaven to the eyes and ears into the rainy streets and cheap meals stretching between the last lights of that paradise and the kindling of its lamps again next day.

Beauvoir may have been a stony crag above a salt and waste land, but there is no need to insist upon its realism when the brackish river, hardly running in its bed of stones, could make silver and perpetual music. The reeds, with no river god and his urn to symbolize their green plenty, sang of the tawny or gypsy end to these blond and fair-haired vapourings, and its voice raised up a hundred mirages to deceive them and cheat their fancies. The conquered Saracens and their struck pavilions would surrender the sloe-eyed beauties that the mind could

conjecture out of those far-off Indian and Caucasian vales. The heroic trumpets had an apostolic fervour behind their frightening din; armour shone as bright as feathers; the phalanxes of spears were thick woods and each tree had been dipped in a cold and deathless light that never left it; the hard, sharp cliffs beyond the burnt plain looked at dawn and sunset as though some strong and terrible liquid had been thrown at them, they became ribbed and took on the shape of shadows, till these bony, thin ghosts would rise up and walk away from their posts, following, it would seem, the retreating clouds that went down to the horizon so as to leave a bare and empty night above, a night deep and appalling in its staring, eyeless depth, and made even more sinister by the starlight. The battlements were of burnt clay and the sentinels dreaded an iron footfall and a giant, metal man upon the ramparts; but this phantom might be there for their protection as much as to destroy them, for they thought the Apocalypse was near, and it must be allowed its shadows to throw before it.

Mirabel was less cynical in its interpretation of the name given to it. But part of the safety that it suggested lay in its impregnable defences so that in its shelter there was room for a good many contradictions of the desert's stony soil. The hillside sloping down to the little lake was terraced out with vineyards, but they were young and scarcely gave wine. The villagers in the valley had sufficient water to make their gardens fruitful, and the harvest of yellow plums was rich enough to make the Knights give the castle this name. They were hard, dry fruit compared with their golden parallels upon the stone walls of the North, having lost all the lusciousness of the plum and taken on little but a mockery of its taste

and colour. Those few stunted trees below the castle looked poor and insignificant from above; when in blossom they were little better than linen thrown on the brambles to dry, and after the half-hearted flowers had turned into fruit the hot sun became an iron frost to them and took all the life out of their flesh. But the castle was called Mirabel from this faint reminder, and an orchard sprang into life at the name; a wood of such thickness and depth, by contrast to this, that the women of the castle who could never have much freedom from the walls, found themselves perfectly lost and hidden in its heart. There were birds singing in every direction, and it was just as difficult to listen to any particular song, not knowing where it lay through the boughs, as to catch sight of the castle-walls through leaves parted by glossy wings and shining throat. In that sudden opening a spray of yellow plums would look as though ready to drop into the mouth and melt there, and then change just before that window closed into a cluster of little parhelions burning by the tower's black caps and hung there by the eyes, that had looked up too intently at the sun before dozing into the hot gulf of afternoon. It was too late, the towers had disappeared; and the hours lulled themselves asleep until the castellan and his knights came back and their voices broke like a mystery into this evening that had lost all sense of direction. There was dead silence at sunset; the stone well in the middle of the orchard was like a drum to catch any sound. But out of that centre of everything their voices were soon heard and the ladies climbed out of the trampled grass to join them.

Blanchgarde was the greatest contradiction of reality, and the only truth that it had was the grove of cypresses.

These had, at any rate, something of the thinness and delicacy belonging to the name, and they were the home of innumerable owls who called out in their abrupt tones all through the night as though to summon the sleepless to their windows. From these, some semblance of truth lay in front of the eyes. Moonlight was flooding the whole landscape, and it had become a winter of the purest and deepest snow, untrodden and unchallenged. It was still and quiet as this, but for the owls, until the suspicious warmth of its light told the mind that there were no trees to be seen anywhere, and now the whole point of that particular castle, guarding some princess in the winter woods who held a whole dynastic future of tragedy or triumph in her labours that were due before the frost died, faded and vanished out of the air. The sentinels on the ramparts saw their castle turned by this pallor into some other situation befitting its romantic name, and Blanchgarde seemed to lie by a silent and wan sea that stretched out in every direction so that the castle and the cypress-grove were the only incidents on its point of rock. The waters sparkled with salt and the waves were dead, heaped into mounds that could roll no further. One of these glittering masses moved a little and the alarm was sounded.

Their trumpets were of a more primitive nature than those that sound in concert-hall or on parade-ground, and the sound beat on the air like a flail. The one raucous, metal word they uttered clanged forth again and again, faster and more insistent than the owls hooting in the cypresses. Men poured out of doors and down each flight of steps; but they had been wakened by a false rumour and the hindermost among them could turn on his steps and go back to the straw before he had

got more than a few paces into the night-air. So those tides were unbroken and unstemmed. It was a peaceful sea, indeed softer and more calm than any ocean can ever be, and the sleepy and lilied air became a lake with the castle of Blanchgarde climbing from a wrist in its waters.

Nigraguarda was to the south, in a most leaden and burning land. The black clouds rolling up for a storm meant an avalanche of rain, or a blight of locusts ; while thunder, when it came, was a loud and terrible drumming above the battlements, and lightning lit up the hosts fighting in the sky. It was decidedly a land of tempests, and it faced towards a mystery, for the shelving slopes were the first advances of the desert and no one knew what lay beyond, at the far side of its unknown breadth. Africa lay in the direct, if uncertain, distance, and the caravans of negro slaves passed on their way from the coast not so very far into the hidden waste that they could not be intercepted and the woolly-haired, basalt prisoners be made to change masters. So the knights of this castle found they had a negro tribe to work the arid lands for them, and the giant stature and huge physique of these serfs made them a little afraid of their force. One day, perhaps, the teeming millions out of these swamps would invade this land to revenge the cruelties that had been practised upon them. They would come to this point on the quickest road to the slave-markets, and, not knowing the Arabs from the Franks, would drown this whole castle in the flood of their black numbers. Nigraguarda had, for this reason, more romantic possibilities than just the one conventional trust against the Saracens, for anything might ride up with the hot winds from the desert. Therefore, the bastions were kept in an exaggerated repair and the

horizon was scanned with more than ordinary attention, for on just one day in perhaps a century all these cares would be rewarded and find their justification. It was an outpost directed against a new kind of foe with whom the knights had never been engaged in battle ; and out of this strangeness they may have dreamed of an empire over the mirages of the desert into their true fulfilment of crystal water and golden sand at the far side of its dead waste.

As for Toron and Scandalion, they were in the thick of the battles. The first had a stubborn, bull-like strength and impregnability, with treacherous ramparts advancing like horns to entice the enemy into ambush. The second was built of the thickest and most armoured material to be found. It had deep wells of water, great granaries of food, and could stand a long siege. Missiles bounded back like hail off its towers ; and even the deadly slings, stronger and much more dangerous than any arrows from a bow, simply twanged and throbbed out their force against its strength. It lay, stretched out like a lion across the plain, and its garrison would spring out on any force retreating from the siege and destroy them before they reached the hills. These two castles were the most dreaded by the Saracens, and they gave the greatest pride to the Crusaders ; their defence yielding a more legendary and romantic pleasure even than that of the two great fastnesses of Kerak and Iblin, though both of them had an incontestable security.

In fact, there were castles in every direction, and no stretch of sky was true to the eyes unless towers rose up at some point of its horizon. Many of its opportunities have already been described. Where two peasants are to be seen felling trees for firewood there are castle walls shining white as any lighthouse above their bowed heads.

Further on, the vines are being trimmed down close to the ground and not one, but two, castles climb into the distance as a tribute to the blue clusters that will soon hang upon those gnarled stems. A shepherd plays his pipe to a dog who dances on his hind feet, behind them the sheep are cropping a smooth field and a castle climbs up at their back into the cooler air of summer; the peasants are hoeing in an enclosure fenced with wattles that are gilded with sun, and the castle makes a painful comparison of its luxury with their ceaseless labours. If summer is burning towards its greatest heat, the village boys are bathing in a stream with a castle high above the banks and a still and exquisite pool for bathing hidden, to all probability, in its walled garden; and now, at last, the harvest comes and a man and woman are reaping the corn with method, for its yellow and clearly cut comb stands stiffly where their sickles have worked, while the red poppies and blue cornflowers grow here and there in its borders. It is a hot September afternoon, the gold lightning breaks out of a cloud that hangs ominous above the labour in front of them, and the castle stands on a little hill in the other direction quite safe from the storm that would seem only to threaten the peasant and his crops and never to menace the castle-dwellers.

I arrived back from this searching out of towers and found myself in the apple-wood again. The lit mullions of the inn burned out, still, through the branches and I tried to make out which were the blind eyes of my own room. Nearly half of the inn must be occupied. The servants lived in damp, old-fashioned closets under the roof, then came a couple of ordinary floors, and under that, some rooms, half drawing-room and half bedroom, of which the doors were always left open so that their

magnificence could be seen by anyone going upstairs. I should like to have placed Mr. and Miss Corder in imagination in an elaborate suite of this sort, rich in gilding and mirrors, but I knew that their good fortune had left them careful, so that their rooms were probably not far under the roof, while optimism would make them pretend that they always chose rooms on the top-floor because of the view. They were probably quite near to me, and it was more than likely I should hear them calling to each other, particularly, I thought, early the next morning before I was properly awake, myself. They would be exclaiming at the beauty of the light and promising themselves a prompt breakfast so as to take the best advantage of its doubtful, autumn life. Later on, I should hear their voices on the staircase.

But I came out from under a tree on to the footpath and there they both were. He had his arm round her waist, and they were talking so busily that they did not hear me come up to them.

S. S.: So you've not gone to bed, yet!

H. C.: No. The evening is so lovely. I should like to sit up all night. Come and talk to us, for we shall never all meet again like this.

C. C.: Let's drag these two seats together! Oh! I'm sorry; have I soaked your shoulders with dew? Everything is wet with it. Mind, if you sit down, that your feet are on the asphalt. Luckily we have all got coats and can't catch cold; besides, who could, on a night like this, so long as one's feet are dry, that is to say?

S. S.: Who could, indeed? Well, what have you done to-day?

C. C.: Another wonderful day of it, but this can't go on. It's too good to last.

S. S.: Well, what exactly was it, this time?

H. C.: We have both been young again. We started off early, so early, in fact, that everything was mist. It was like an August morning and I thought we were back once more by the blackberries. We used to love them so, but, of course, at the time I'm thinking of, we weren't children any longer. Oh, it was years and years before you knew us! We weren't children, but we'd only just begun sketching. To-night we can remember everything we've ever seen. We were going to be artists once, but I had to teach instead, and so had Carl. Never mind, we've had enough money the last ten years to go everywhere we used to want to be. Everything is so clear and fresh to-night that we are just imagining to ourselves that we had got to such places before it was too late. In fact, we are going anywhere we like and have reached there just in time to be inspired. I'm so happy in this make-belief that I regret nothing. All the hardships of travel are gone, and there's nothing one need do except drink in the poetry before one's eyes, and try to remember it.

S. S.: Well, give it me in more detail. Where did it begin?

H. C.: You tell him, Carl. I should take too much time, and there is such a lot to say.

C. C.: Hilda began the story quite right. It was very misty when we left the inn, so much so, in fact, that we hardly knew which way to go, but I heard the sea from one end of the valley, and so we walked away from it, as near as we could judge, and soon found the beginning of the stone steps. When you go up the middle of the village you will remember there is a mountain stream pouring down to work the mills, and you walk

straight up the path by its side until you reach a couple of steps and a bridge. You cross this, go down the other side, walk about twenty yards, and then you reach the real beginning of the stairs; and it's better to go very slow, because there's an hour's climb before you.

The cobbles are all wet and glistening. For a bit there are high walls on either side, till you get above the houses and the wall gives up trying to keep pace with the steps. Then they go up the sheer side of the cliff, held up on little stone brackets. Presently you have climbed above the top of the cliff, and this is where the real valley—the Valle del Diavolo—begins. The bed of the valley is on a steep slope, and by this point the top of the cliff is practically the bed of the valley. There is a big boulder here to mark the best place for the echo. It's at one side of the road, and the cab drivers stop by it and shout through their hands. All the way up the valley you can hear this being done. But we didn't wait long there, we crossed the road and took the steps again at the other side, soon leaving the road far down below puffing laboriously up its curves.

S. S.: I know, already, where it is. The echo gave it away to me. I've had "Servizio, signore" and "buon giorno per tutti" bellowed at me many a time by that boulder. Go on!

C. C.: At this point there are a certain number of trees, not tall ones, though, because there's too much shade and the air's damp. The rocks are dripping with maiden-hair fern, like you see in conservatories; but soon it becomes less rocky, the path is no longer stone steps but beaten earth, and there's actually quite a lot of soil on the ground. The path climbs round a dark corner into the light, and this is the top of a second cliff.

When we reached to it the mist had cleared a little and we rested there, looking down at the sea. While we waited the fog lifted like anything.

S. S.: Yes. The clouds go up the hillside like pulling up a blind. In ten minutes they can be gone.

C. C.: They were moving so quickly we decided to go straight on so as to get the view the moment it appeared. The path is now a steep incline with a stone step at regular intervals of a few paces, and a whole flight of them whenever there is an awkward corner. Down below, the road has climbed up much nearer and is almost on a level with us at the end of the valley. It is banked up round that corner and then comes back to our side of the hill ready for its last climb. Soon our path joins it and we have to go on past the timber carts and the struggling mules.

A few houses come into sight, and there are great piles of firewood at the side of the road shining in the sun like sticks of chocolate, and so distinct that you can see every separate twig. Here the carts are loading and the air is noisy with shouts. Just past this, the road is suddenly level for the first time and the walls of the town arch across it and cover it with shade.

H. C.: The walls are Moorish.

S. S.: That's right. I never see them without thinking of a scimitar and a white burnous—a soldier-monk, in fact. Did you stop to see the Moorish cloister ?

C. C.: No, we decided to eat our lunch on the hillside above the town. We were told which path to take and went on straight ahead without stopping. It's another path just like the one we came up by.

H. C.: But we must see the town. We must stop on our way back.

C. C.: We needn't climb too far. We just want to go up this valley above the roofs of the town so that we can see right over the spur of hills on which it's built.

H. C.: Then we're nearly high enough, now!

C. C.: Just a few steps further. Not even the top of this flight; no, the next will do, I am sure. Now we'll leave the path and climb a little into the grass, in fact we can change from place to place round about here and stay some time. There are different views every way you turn.

H. C.: This is the most lovely valley in the world. Look at the vines all terraced out. And what is all the shouting down there?

S. S.: Giuseppe, the old cabman, is one of the voices. The others are children playing with the echo, and women working in the vines. But they stop singing the moment a foreigner comes near them. It's a traditional song, heaven knows how old! Isn't it extraordinary to think that these sounds so far away are really just a few yards as the crow flies? All the little villages in the valley shout their news across to each other and carry on conversations. There's a festa up in that one, Pogerola, once a year, and you've no idea what the brass band sounds like echoing back from the rocks all over this vertical landscape going in the opposite direction to the ordinary; the villages in the valley are some of them half-an-hour apart and yet they may be only two hundred yards away through the air. You speak of the vines, but they're just beginning to cover them in for the winter. It's done with thin straw mattresses, and they do the same with the orange and lemon groves. It looks as if you could walk along them, they're laid so close together.

C. C.: There seems to me to be something of every kind of beauty in the world here at our feet. Look at those limestone rocks, they're worn into the shapes Leonardo loved to draw!

S. S.: Come a little nearer the edge. We must try and climb in front of that corner on the right; I should like you to see something beyond it.

Down below, the sea was a floor of lapis flecked with the most violent gold straws; and in the middle of it an immense golden bridge led straight into the fiery furnace that burnt with hardly a cloud to shield it. The rocks were hot under the feet and almost burnt the fingers.

S. S.: Come right out into the sun, here, so long as you're not frightened of the drop. But don't look at it, watch the sea, instead. It's too far below for you to be frightened of it. Come and stand beside me here, one by one; there's only room for one of you at a time. Those are the isles of the sirens, and that's Capri.

Following the line of coast the horizon, just off the land, was marked with a lovely pattern of blue strokes, like ink from a brush, but put there by a genius in calligraphy. The beauty of arrangement was such that it was impossible to believe they were simply some rocks and an island; indeed, one of the rocks was a great natural arch rising out of the sea, and even at this distance the light could be seen through its centre.

C. C.: It's unbelievable. Who can blame Tiberius for shutting himself up there?

S. S.: It must be twenty miles, or more, from here. Think what it must have been like till a hundred years ago; you know Murat brought it into history again. He captured it from the English. There are two pictures of his attack on the island in the Museum of

San Martino at Naples; most curious things, in themselves, because of the landscape and the strange uniforms of Murat's troops. His son Achille wears either nothing at all, or else a salmon-pink pair of trousers and a tall, plumed shako.(3) The island was remembered again after that and people began building villas and spoiling it. Before that, there was no life there except fishermen and goats, and one solitary Carthusian monastery.

You are right. There's every kind of beauty in the world somewhere here at our feet. This is a sort of cosmogony or universe, and so far as one can see there's nothing left out of it. Do you see that mountain over there above the town and beyond the next bay? The stone building you see at the top is a ruined monastery, the Camaldoli dell' Avvocata; it looks small from here, but it's quite a big place when you get up to it. In front of the gate you can sit at a stone table and watch the very top of Vesuvius coming out of the hills at the back here. The smoke rises up as if from a chimney. I have always thought that would be the place to climb to if there was an eruption.

H. C.: What is the other side of Vesuvius like? We have all driven along by Portici and Pompeii.

S. S.: It's a huge plain of vineyards right along to Caserta, only they're grown much higher than any other vines I have ever seen, and form really big trellises; but nothing can hide the mountain; it's always there if you turn your head. I need hardly mention Caserta. I know you've read about its garden with three miles of cascades and about its marble staircase. Then there's the aqueduct that brings water to the garden. It crosses valleys like Roman work, five tiers of arches one above another. There are great ilex-woods in the park;

every single leaf shines and glitters, but you'll have seen a wood of that kind at Portici.

The real plain of Vesuvius is like nothing else in the world. Pulcinella came from down there at Aversa. Even in Roman times those towns were famous for impromptu comedies. The white clothes of Pulcinella were taken from the peasant's dress; they worked like that in the vines. The dog-days of the grape-harvest were a naked saturnalia with sunburnt bodies jostled by bloated and aquiline masks; every incident of the day became a comedy and these scenes were playing all the time in the blacksmith's and the butcher's as well as in market-place and vineyard. Think of the tarantellas! Think of the tenor voices singing in the night; read the President de Brosses or Doctor Burney's "Musical Tour" if you want to know what both trained and untrained music was like in Naples.(4) The city had as great a population as London, and its churches and palaces were as fine as any to be found in Europe. It had fresco painters who floated a whole population on clouds if a wall or ceiling was allowed them. There were four or five monasteries as big as walled villages, full of majolica cloisters and painted halls; each had a parlatorio, a concert-hall where the choir sang, and a pharmacy to sell its particular sweetmeats and perfumes. Just a little later, after Murat's Hussar-kingdom had collapsed, a new kind of music appeared and Bellini's airs were sung all over the town.

But we are getting far away from this bucolic lunch we are eating. What have you brought with you?

H. C.: Only some sandwiches. We were told we could pay a few coppers and pick ourselves some fruit.

S. S.: Then shake some of those apples off that tree.

They taste of lemons, and are a special kind grown on these hills and on the slopes of Vesuvius.

C. C.: Look at that boat down there, Hilda. It's like the skeleton of an insect from up here, and when the men in it are rowing it walks over the sea on two pairs of legs. It's like a skeleton slowly moving in liquid blue amber.

H. C.: At one time it would have been enough for us, by itself. Just drawn up somewhere with a few nets on a cold shore, and we'd have sat in the wind drawing it.

C. C.: A couple of nights ago the fishing-boats were better than anything I have ever seen. They came sailing in at sunset, each with a wonderful arched sail as curved as a swallow's wing. Then the night fell and I could hear them getting out their tackle and putting things ready. Soon each of them had a light burning and they started to move. All through the night these lights were perpetually arranging themselves into fresh formations.

S. S.: They're like a flight of birds in slow motion. They are all the time wheeling into line, dropping into place. The windows of the hotel, terraced high above the sea, make a wonderful place to watch from. You might be leaning over the edge of a cloud, and the whole night through little waves are breaking. Their sound is like thin glass rods being dropped and broken, or a handful of coins thrown into the air and fallen jangling back again. As they go along, a man in the prow of each boat knocks against the timbers and this is done to attract the inquisitive fish, over and above the enticement that the lamp has to their curiosity. There is so much hammering that it is difficult to sleep and you feel some enormous ship is building through the night.

C. C.: You are better at describing things than I

am. Next morning, when I looked out of window, all the boats had gone, and there were only a couple of little things, quite square in shape but hardly bigger than canoes. In each of them there was a man sitting with his coat over his head because of the cold mist. They were off the end of the pier. Because of these cowls the men looked like monks; but although they moved they were not rowing, and when I looked to see how it was done I saw each of them had his hands, but only just his hands, in the water. This turned them for me from monks into water-beetles, and they became still more inexplicable until one of them, without turning the boat or even looking round, began to move backwards and I realized that they were patrolling their nets, hauling themselves, hand to hand, along the strings. We ate some of their fish for dinner. Aulli they're called; they have beaks like swordfish, and green backbones. I can't say I liked them!

S. S.: The fishing-boats will have gone back to where they came from, across there in Calabria, at the far side of the bay. It's an almost unknown land. I went not long ago to the Certosa di Padula, a huge ruined monastery where, so far as I know, only one Englishman beside myself has been. It has the biggest cloister I have ever seen, and beautiful majolica floors. Paestum is only on the edge of that country. You'll have to go there to see the three temples! But do you see that enormous knife-edged mountain? It's at the back of Paestum, twenty miles from there and sixty miles from here. It is the mountain that Virgil loved, and he wrote about the green oak woods on its slopes.

H. C.: Yes. And what about Ravello here, just in front of us. It has a Moorish cloister?

S. S.: A Moorish cloister and a great deal besides. It has a Cosmatesque pulpit carried on a pack of lions, each with his tail curved in a fresh direction; it has a Moorish fountain, Moorish walls, and one or two other churches with smaller pulpits supported on less numerous families of lions.

C. C.: Let's climb a little higher. I should like to see right over Ravello into the valley beyond. We'll go further up the back of this hill.

We started to walk up the slope and soon came into quite a thick wood of chestnuts. A little mountain stream ran through it in quick and headlong leaps down the side of some great masses of dark rock, which I was surprised to find were of lava, so that this molten mass must have been thrown right over the shoulder of the hill at some time. The grass banks were slippery and polished with heat, so we left the water and climbed up the hill, which had now left any kind of cultivation behind. The chestnuts, with an oak tree here and there, were used as feeding grounds by herds of pigs, and some children looking after them sat high up on the rocks so that they could see their charges.

S. S.: Let's stop here; we can see everything, everything, that is to say, except Vesuvius, and that we could see if we toiled uphill for another quarter of an hour. We have got almost every conceivable thing to interest us here at our feet. We could live up here; and, if we wanted to learn, just go down the hill. Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Saracen, Norman, the Gothick and the Renaissance, anything and everything down to the time of Murat lie below us.

C. C.: I'd sooner stay up here; I can't be bothered with them. What do I care for styles?

H. C.: That's quite a new sentiment with you, Carl. You'd have never said it before!

C. C.: I could live in a hermit's cave on apples and chestnuts, and never want anything richer than a little honey. Even that I can imagine tasting of asphodels, or thyme. Why did you bring us up here; you've spoilt everything on the way?

S. S.: I thought we came up, on purpose, in order to get the view.

C. C.: So we did, but now it's nothing more to me than the glass of my spectacles. It's only the cool air and the peace that I like, and I don't want to look off the hillside; it only makes me sad.

H. C.: It's all over now, all over, and we've only got to do down-hill for dinner and for a few minutes' talk in that smoky sitting-room before we go to bed.

S. S.: And it's "all over" in a much more serious sense than that. Look at all this below us, and then consider that for the last hundred years there have been only two forms of art: music and the novel. Apart from this there has been no painter or writer who has been given proper opportunities. Architecture, the greatest of all the arts, and all the minor arts at the other end of the scale, are dead; they don't exist any more—unless you call faking a minor art, which I don't. Worse than this, there is now nothing between Academism amd the idiocies of the American poets, of Le Corbusier, of "Les Six." They're no better than the men of the academy; they've tumbled over the edge and can't climb back. But the cruellest thing of all is that because we have produced nothing of our own we are to have centuries of Americanization. Anything, anything, anything, except America!!! Wouldn't you sooner be

a beggar in the dust; or live up here, as you say, on chestnuts and apples? Their nerveless, senseless vitality and their vulgarity; when can there ever be anything to come out of that? They will have ruined the whole world before they produce anything themselves.

The English are always a little way behind; can't they catch up with the present and make it their own? They have done this before. They were a century later with the Renaissance than Italy, Spain, or France; they adapted the principles of Palladio two generations after his death and worked them out to their logical finish; they produced their first good painters when every other country had stopped; and after the Napoleonic wars, when Europe was nearly as dead as it is now, their poets and their painters were the first to search out the material on which the French genius fed itself till the new discoveries made by Cézanne. Can't we apologize to history in some such manner as this for our offspring across the Atlantic?

Do you know what is one of the greatest evils of our time? The railway fare to Paris is too cheap. It is a fatal thing to copy with the object immediately under the eyes. That is what is wrong with the painters to-day. How many of the Englishmen who made our Renaissance and formed our classical architecture had ever been to Italy? Only the one or two of them who had enough individuality to cope with what they saw, and to keep their talent as an interpretation and not an imitation. There were enough ideas left begun, but not finished, by the Italians in their fever of construction to last us for a century and a half; till too much classical antiquity was unearthed and we began copying again instead of interpreting.

Naturally, a proper documentation is necessary, but, once that is secured, it is not essential for any advance to be along lines parallel to the thing studied. It is a radiation from a centre, and not two lines like a double railway track locked close to each other and moving through the landscape in unalterable relation to each other.

Men of third-rate talent could produce a lifetime of good work in those days. There was little genius but much accomplishment ; in fact, the trophies of good manners and good education, the results of being taught things that were useful and that pointed towards practicable directions. Fashions changed slowly and there was not too much hurry. Above all things, their output was continuous and not in the least degree shy or constipated. There was no occasion to be nervous of criticism if your new work did not show such a radical difference from your last work that it was difficult to give it credit as the work of the same person. These things apply, as I said, to third-rate talent, not even to marked ability, and still less to the real, and ever rare, inspiration of the day.

It is time for some new and tremendous energy to be put into action. One man could do it. It needs an Inigo Jones, even a Wordsworth ; and if such a person were to arrive, there might be a safe future of fifty years following after him. Why should all our pleasure come out of the past ? We want to look at the past with a different focus of the eyes so that it does not simply stay on the retina, but soaks into, and then out of, our bodies ; leaving some kind of life-principle behind it and not merely its dead shadow that gets in our way and trips us up at every turn. The action of the past upon us

should be like that of a fine day, when the sun's rays go entirely through one, and their warmth and vitalization can be felt the whole time at work within the body. Indeed, it should be just the same sensation as we are getting now, sitting upon this hillside.

C. C.: That is all very well, but what use is it our trying to pretend we are Moors, or Sicilian Greeks, or Angevins landed at Naples? We can never be anything but ourselves. I was born like you were on the North coast of England. Trams, trawlers, perhaps a bit of a castle in ruins or an old abbey, these are the things at the back of our minds, the only ingredients and material that really come natural to us. Objects outside that are an artifice that no amount of imagination can support for more than a few moments. The longer you meddle with these things the more dangerous your situation becomes.

S. S.: Do you realize what things you are denying by this? Plato wished to banish poets from the perfected state because of their incessant grumbling and their strivings after spiritual and physical preferment; there was hardly what we should admit to be music in his time, but musicians are a still more dangerous gang of conspirators, and they would be banished by Plato to the bleakest and coldest Siberia. How much better it is to be surrounded by grumbling than by placidity and blandness! I suppose you prefer a state of easy contentment?

H. C.: Carl didn't feel like that when he was poor. He used to hate any kind of boundary, or finality, but now he would like a wall built round the five hundred a year that father left him.

S. S.: I am a great believer in walls, but I want them built round quite other things than an income.

C. C.: Think of those dead bodies below. It isn't even our own cemetery: it's an alien burial-ground.

S. S.: You must admit, though, what a degree of pathos there is attaching to them. There is nothing left for them except time-wasting. They are choking and clogging time, trying to delay him. The more developed one's senses, the more dangerous and potent is their command upon one's time and attention. But it seems to me to be a most welcome usurpation.

C. C.: You are younger than I am. I have spent three-quarters of my life puzzling over them and asking them questions. Of course they never answer. They can't.

S. S.: That's exactly where you fail. You should both ask the question yourself, and answer it yourself. Sometimes you should be ready with your answer before you have decided what the question is. We were talking of the weight of pathos that there is hanging upon these old, shattered ruins. They are so old, so dreadfully old, and some of them have become almost impossible to believe in. The dead Caesars have nothing left now except their physical likeness to certain newspaper peers; and as for the mediaeval age, it is impossible to be too careful about it. In the book I am writing I have tried to steer absolutely away from its known and conventional scenes. Magna Carta, Westminster Abbey, the battle of Crécy, what use is there in breathing upon those dead and hollow bones?

But I think an attempted resuscitation to be of the very greatest importance, for unless some strong effort is made, we shall lose half of our greatness as a nation and may soon be thrown back upon our old and original continental situation, and in order to prevent this, or,

at any rate, to deal with it when the situation arises, we must discover what our origins have been and what has been their early and natural direction. In doing this, we find our destinies were in the hands of a small minority, who also moulded the future for several other races besides our own, so that the inquiry has to be directed upon more general lines than just the particularities of our one half-island, for I am thinking only of England.

In thinking of all that Europe has produced, and there are five or six different dregs of this production in the valleys at our feet, it is no use to us to think of ourselves in terms of what the ordinary, dark Mediterranean man has accomplished, because he is as far removed from us as the African or Asiatic who may be our rival in the centuries to come. But our own type has broken into this identical landscape, and even carried his activities much further, up to the most distant corners of the Mediterranean, and it is as the alternative to the Latin that we have to consider him.

All we have to show for our contribution towards a general culture of the white man over the last three hundred years has been a steady succession of good poets, and this misty and rather intangible pre-eminence is, perhaps, enough to justify an attempt to bring out some further poetical material in our past achievement. But, besides this, there are two other facets to our task: the amount of this energy in Northern Europe that was not influenced by Italy and that, at the same time, has not become too familiar and spoilt from over-familiarity; and, secondly, the sort of spiritual conquest of the Italian by the fair-haired race who fixed so often upon this physical type to convey his most convinced messages in painting. In fact, the question is resolved into that

amount of the Gothick which the Renaissance did not conquer, and that amount of the Renaissance which was conquered by the Gothick; so that we are feeling both edges of our subject, and thinking of it only in victory and not in defeat.

Don't, for the moment, let us delay any longer over those dark, sallow townsmen, for we have the immense bulk of our own achievement to discuss and it is a far more profitable soil to ponder over for our own future. We must come down from this hillside into greener valleys and more gentle slopes.

H. C.: Do you notice how much lighter it is up here? The valleys are getting quite dark.

S. S.: The Camaldoli, that ruined monastery up on the mountain, has the sun shining on it for some ten minutes, or quarter of an hour, after it is dark everywhere else. The top of the mountain is like a little cropped field and where it slopes out of sight is the actual summit. There are a quantity of goats up there, and the sunset must have the most intense pastoral beauty under this particularized sun-burst thrown up over a cloud-top from far below on the horizon. Everything round is a dark sea of unknown depth with enormous rocks coming up nearly to the surface.

As we spoke, the beams slowly slid over the highest of the mountains' rocks on to the green plateau at the top. But this evening it was only for the duration of a moment; a cloud quenched these rays at their source and the darkness engulfed that far-off hermitage. The mountain was half-hidden in clouds, all the colour went out of every object and the twilight had begun. All the same, there was enough light to pick one's way quite carefully between the stones, and in and out among the tree-stems. They

were oak trees, or chestnuts, with here and there a few of the apple trees that grow only on these hills and on the slopes of Vesuvius. Their yellow-green fruit has a lemon taste and almost a lemon shape, and it was their boughs that we had shaken to help out our midday meal.

It began to be extremely cold; but in a curious manner as though it was some bitter sentiment and not simply the chill evening that made it difficult to linger on the way. I should have liked to go slowly, stopping at anything which drew my attention, and I allowed my two friends to walk some distance in front of me down the cobbles, indeed we were a turn of the path apart from each other, and they would be going for this reason in one direction while my way was set in another.

This landscape had a popular emotional importance for me, because my own spasmodic and frustrated attempts had so often taken place within its orbit and under its direct inspiration. Each year I spent several months of the winter here and it had become for me, since Venice, which was my true predilection, was too crowded, too urban, and too cold, the very epitome of that most desired contact with the heights of poetry, and prose, to which I hoped to climb. It was associated in my mind with an alternate fever and depression of the nerves; typified by the incredible beauty of the landscape contrasted with the poverty and squalor of Amalfi, that little dead fishing-town; and the most copious springs of inspiration in contrast to what could be the appalling and deathly dullness of many months spent in that unique and extraordinary hotel.

Near by is Naples, where I used to wander rediscovering for myself a whole tribe of forgotten architects and fresco-painters. The volcano is in every view, alike from a

window or from the belvedere of a monastery; and to and fro from the town it is necessary to pass the opera where Rossini won many of his triumphs, and the conservatory of music where the composers from Jomelli and Leonardo Leo down to Bellini had studied. The Neapolitan air is alive with its own lyrical or comic melodies. The beggars and the slums are worthy of Benares and the crowded cities of China. Nothing is spoilt by too much being known about it, or by the false enthusiasm of the foreigner.

As for the country place to which we retired, enough has been said about its steep and ecstatic wonders. Little villages are perched as if on solid clouds of rock to which it takes many hours to climb. They are inaccessible as the monasteries of Meteora and Athos. The Valle del Diavolo is designed like a Chinese landscape as a decoration against the sky and not a design upon the flat earth. It unrolls itself vertically. On a clear day, if you stand in the valley and look at its two highest ridges, the sea like a solid blue wall towers up visibly above them, and loses, altogether, its appearance of a plain. A thin line of golden sand, that the Greeks called the belt of Venus, runs round the bay into the distance towards Monte Alburno and the temples of Paestum. The whole direction of its curve seems to be designed to lead the imagination towards those fabled, but crumbling beauties of pillar and architrave; while above them, but far away, even in their distance, stands that legendary mountain with its terrifying and jagged knife-edge of rock. Beyond that, the land seems to be of rocks, of goats, and of eagles, until the Val di Diano is reached with the Certosa di Padula like a floriated Escurial in its midst. This building, until I managed to reach to it, lay on the

furthest borders of ambition, and I was led to hazard its splendours on a scale which, luckily for my contentment of mind, the actual sight of its majolica halls could quickly confirm.

Such was the scenery of my ambition for several of the most impressionable years of life, and I found far more in it than would ever have reached me among the spires of Oxford or the cafés of Montparnasse.

So far as I was concerned there was an indescribable romance about every bough, every rock, and every sip of air in that whole day. They represented the first things I had ever found for myself, and their mere enumeration has the strongest effect upon my emotions. I felt that the first phase of their activity upon me was over and that when I came back to them again, for better or for worse, they would find me at a later stage of development. The arrogant blossom now gave place to the fruit it had been masking, and who could tell how long this process might lie fallow and dormant before it happened again ? But my two friends with whom I had spent what seemed to be long hours of travel and experience, had been my first introduction into even the possibility of such things, and, in thinking of the distance between the first hints they had given me and the realization of their effects, I could see a range of immeasurable heights before me to be reached by energy and courage.

The new subject in front of me broke into a coda, or final fantasia upon its themes and trappings. The different orders of monks were so many uniform and drably communistic tribes of insects, vowed for a greater patience in their labours to perpetual celibacy, and spurred by this privation into more glorious feats of construction. The legalized magic that they served kept

them safe, and their carefully preserved strength had continual reinforcements of fresh blood, the same type being perpetually drafted into its body as though they had, themselves, the power of procreation and the faculty of determining the look and the disposition of their offspring.

The horizon trembled with towers, and the air shook with bells. The northern woods that up till now had held nothing more lively than wolf or bear flowered into the strangest blossoms of romance. A universal desire for beauty passed itself over even the smallest details of life, so that nothing was left untouched by it and even the scratchings on the walls of a prison, drawn in damp darkness with perhaps nothing more serviceable than the nail of the finger, possess exactly the same characteristics and ingredients of style as the highest masterpieces that the age could accomplish. The fair-haired races had come into their powers of creation, and before they abandoned these for commerce and for the more practical sciences of life, and before they established the often unwilling colonies of their blood in other continents, they worked upon larger if less accurate images of heaven than the Mediterranean man, who was slower to abandon his superstition, and, if he did so, changed quickly from it into the newer rumours of mythology. The small septs of this fair-haired race working on the leaven of Celt or Teuton over whom they had secured dominion arrived at a feverish and precipitate fermentation of their ideas ; and they carried their principles all over the known world where the only barren soil for them was Rome, and even Naples and Florence broke into some fulfilment of this alien style.

The Dominicans, the "dogs of the Lord," were

habited like black and white mongrels; they matched the magpies in the fields. Carthusians were nothing more nor less than Moors of Atlas; the Cistercians more faded and less full in their line; the friars rusty and travel-stained in their drab brown. They were all at work upon their hives and were busily storing them for the centuries of winters that lay in front. The façades of the Latins had but a flat eloquence compared with the more nervous and troubled architecture of the North, which wore as much protection and made as many thrusts into the air as any armed warrior in his mail. The rigours of rain and wind had been taken into consideration instead of the summer shade and moonlight of the South. Roofs were buttressed and strung into position; the glass walls of churches were held up as perilously as any dancer by the corps de ballet.

Villages with more geese than men lay along the green lanes that led from town to town. The villages were empty because the peasants were working the fields. And all the time a gang of white cranes stood mutely like overseers in the distance and came up whenever the peasants moved to see if any grain or any roots had been left behind. Their nests were on the chimney-stacks and among the roofs. The strange, almost oriental elaboration that these birds gave to the landscape was supported by the dress of the peasants, who celebrated a feast-day of the Church every week and were, therefore, seldom for any stretch of time out of their best clothes.

The armies of the day, however small, made an extreme and unparalleled effect, for, once again, like the insects, certain ranks out of their number, and those the most potential and dangerous to the enemy, were considered to be of so little importance that no attempt was made

at their protection, and they were left without armour. Once the bow and arrow, their weapon of offence, had become useless from too close quarter, they had no shield, no helmet, and nothing better than a sharp knife, or spiked club, with which to defend themselves. No quarter was offered them ; for they were not thought of sufficient importance to be taken prisoner. For this reason it is difficult to find their record, and artist or sculptor passed them over rapidly, if even delaying at all, in order to arrive at his patron, the Knight.

There is a bend on the path and a clump of these steel men are seen pointing beakedly, and creaking with a suspicious noisiness, towards where the artist has thought fit to station himself. We may add a frostiness to the early air which the artist lacked the faculty to portray, and so we can equip the knights and even their horses with the appropriate smoke of breath. If their beavors were down, ready for a surprise attack, they had no wider range of vision than the horse in his blinkers, or the bull who charges wildly ahead with his eyes on the ground. In order to see anything to either side of them both knight and horse had to veer round, and their slow, noisily rattling progress and the caution with which they had so often to turn their whole direction, has removed their semblance to human beings. They are the warrior-insects, flanked and backed by the harmful but defenceless varieties that are only meant to kill and be killed, and not to kill and be saved, whether defeated or victorious. Once he had been knocked from his horse the knight could not rise to his feet, much less mount his horse without help, and this left him safely on the ground, where he knew that honourable quarter would be offered to him. His code of manners let him accept this without

shame ; unless he was killed outright in battle he would survive.

The cloister was the only alternative to this life of risks, and the making of cloisters is an art which the climate of Spain and Portugal favoured more particularly, with their extremes of heat to be shaded from and the windy draughts of winter to be kept away, so that no fair specimen of this range of invention can be found in Italy, or in any other country, and these walks of latticed stone must be seen in their finest examples in Catalonia or in Portugal. There they seem essentially to be the necessity of an invading race, to whom the new climate was either enervating, if they came from the North, or vigorous, if their land of origin was Africa.

However that may be, the mind prefers to think of them in the summer heat, or before its true fullness, while the garden walled in by the cloister was lit by low and humble flowers. The fruit-boughs lifted their loads of snow into the upper air making a delicate and fragile tracery against that soft and pigeon-throated blue. Below this, the cloister windows were sharp cut and nerved like leaves to these flowers above, which murmured, not with the crooning of the appropriate dove, but with the loud wings of the bees gathering honey. For thinness and fineness it was like living among the frost-flowers on the glass. It was very early in the morning, and in a moment the first footfalls would sound down the stone corridors. Then the boughs would turn from their blossom into fruit, for in the imagination we need not time our moods to the season's clock.

But that footfall never came, nor did the blossom lie for longer than a thought upon the bough. The leaves had been jewelled into this image by the moonlight, and

when I looked round there was nobody in sight and not even a lit window among the mullions in the high wall. So they had gone, too, and I wondered if they had ever been with me, under the ridged roofs, and in this world of transmuted orchards. They were back in the pathos out of which they had been drawn, and into which they were put away each fresh time they were considered.

There was nothing to disturb this tranquil mood, and even the branches held themselves still as though unwilling to break it. The wood was little more than a tapestry in this faded calm, so that it had a tenuous but indestructible strength that nothing but its own changes could alter. This would hold until the dying out of the feminine and thoughtless moonlight, which only adds its own ghosts to the world. Just now it had not even this promise, and the two figures who had been with me must have wandered far away into its depths and would not, or could not, come back. So I walked between the apple-hung phantoms into the dead house, and kindled one of its sleeping eyes with a light that poured my own image into a misty glass, where I looked, and, even then, found no one beside me. Nor was there any sound in the house; and they must have been sketching far away, at such a distance that this very darkness had become light and had lent itself generously to them for their unwilling mockery of the detail that they loved. There I should have liked to follow them, and did so in some measure as I lay trying to sleep.

II

THESE SAD RUINS

THE autumn air in the early morning outside the train had all the qualities of taste proper to its season; it was the time for yellow and green plums, for partridges heaped by the red berries they live among, and even, in the not distant future, for venison. The spotless villages that the train flew past seemed just to keep their foothold, and no more, in the sandy plain, among the bracken, or in a clearing of the fir-trees. In spite of the sharp winds that blew round every corner the streets of Berlin had not a particle of dust in them; the motors were noisier and more determined than those of London or Paris, and there were no beggars or street-vendors loitering on the pavement.

This is the town to repair to for a true and clear focus of the present. It has a modernity which is really omnipresent and has not been arrived at by the mere showing of a few freak pictures in a dealer's maws. It has no Latin Quarter, no slums, and there is a decidedly barbarian strength about its newness.

Now the writing of this book has been a slow and interrupted process. It has entailed many months of digging and delving in museum and library and many days in railway and motor car. In its happy moments it has moved at a sure and headlong speed that, if the

book has any merit to it, must have shown its fast and fiery track to the reader and blown him along in the same wind of poetry that helped me to my ends. I have said that there were many interruptions, and it is only fair to add that some of these were at my own instigation, for, however hard I may be working, I must be the master and not the slave of my method. My actual reason for coming to Germany was in order to revise and complete a long delayed book on the architecture that is a parallel in building to the age of Bach, of Mozart, and of Haydn. Here, in Berlin, and there is no need for us to go further, I found new states of mind and new conditions of life that made this particular past I searched for, seem even deader than the stones and plaster out of which it was composed. This trip that I was making was an interlude in the bigger work that lay behind and in front of me, and of which this book is the outcome, but here I found myself assisting at a scene within a scene, and discovered a great impetus in its contrast to the two tasks I had set myself and in its difference from every other culture of the present.

After living in two dead pasts and a drab present, compared with what the present might be, were one to think of it in terms of the ideal, certainly this city led one, whatever its shortcomings, into a new and stimulating perspective, even if its details were crude or repulsive. The conditions of life were undoubtedly moving, and not either drifting or slowing down into a paralysed mockery of their own dead days of activity. Ugliness and rawness gave something to the mind which the brick villas and trim gardens of our own country can never supply. The war of sexes and the war of machines were at their height of strength; there was

no pity and no quarter allowed. Because of this, all the combatants had the air of tried veterans, and the fruits of their experience showed in remote and curious corners of the spirit.

This city of "night-life" had a very different air to the *dîners fleuris* of the Riviera, as though the cost of flowers and the short life that is all they have, had banished these ornaments of dissipation in favour of the more material satisfactions of food, wine, and music. Money spent had to buy its full weight of these three things, and, in comparison with that elegant and vacuous coast of villas the food had to be heavier, the wine stronger, and the music louder and more brassy-breathed. These novices in pleasure had a younger zest and a bigger appetite for their task. They were more seriously inclined to it. The promptness of servants and waiters was no part of elegance and fashion but had been enforced by the business-man's standards of efficiency. It had a military insistence that no time should be wasted, a very different disposition from that of all other haunts of this kind where the only aim and purpose is to spend time. Even the hotels and their inmates were interesting. This was true of so unlikely a place as the hotel-lounge, and the strange horror inspired by gross appetites hung heavily in the smoke-laden air and distilled itself from cigars, from leather chairs, from the women waiting there, and even somehow from the lift.

The continual journeys of this comfortably padded cage were the moves and countermoves of a game. Someone noticed long before would now come out from that metal door and associate himself with one of the girls waiting there to be taken out to dinner. He was a young, but largely built man of commerce travelling,

probably, in some minutiæ of machinery, the name and use of which would be unknown to a layman like myself, and before they went out of the swing-door into their taxi they would have a moment's talk with a whole group exactly similar to themselves, and to whom they were obviously well known.

Even the lift that shook up and threw down these changing dice had about it some details that gave clues to many of the lesser mysteries. Inside, there was a large paper rack full of the *Chicago Tribune*, and with a generous assortment of German illustrated papers. These were a study in themselves. A cohort of Tiller and Jackson girls dwindled along into more native beauties, and they were certainly as far removed in type from the big-heads popularized in North America by cinema necessities as they were unlike the revue-stars of England, or the plumed spectres admired by the French. But a moment's glance along them led the eyes to a placard with the words Claude and Cordelia D'Ors from the Ambassadeurs, Paris, upon it, and then the lift came to a stop and it was time to step out from that familiar door with overcoat held carefully so as not to catch on the steel trellis.

Sitting in the hall this time were three or four young negresses, the property, as I knew, of the jazz-band players from the night club on the roof of the hotel; and then, on its return journey, the doors clanged open and Claude and Cordelia made their appearance. They were dancing every night for a week in the roof-garden on top of the hotel. They were a remarkable pair. To begin with, it was evidently their intention to give an impression that they were brother and sister; behind this were several other fixed ideas. Both Claude and

Cordelia had fair hair, Cordelia wore her hair long and Claude had a fair moustache. These were two items on whose distinction they much prided themselves, and, as well as this, Cordelia wore long skirts that all but trailed upon the ground. Even among themselves they spoke French, but French of a significant, strained kind that roused suspicion as to whether they may not have been French-Canadian, instead of French, by origin. It is difficult to know under what aspect they visualized themselves, but there was something vaguely Chopinesque in sentiment about their appearance, and its effects were too carefully calculated to allow of this impression being fortuitous. Upon this background there was superimposed, somehow, the suggestion that the tango was the natural measure to which they moved, so that fox-trot or one-step they would provide so as to oblige their audience, and it would be beautifully executed of necessity, but without their allowing it to be supposed that it really interested them, or that they were doing it for any other reason than simply to please their friends.

They looked quite unruffled and entirely sure of themselves. I wondered if they ever quarrelled. Now and again, I felt sure, Cordelia must feel irritated by these long, straight lines imposed upon her conduct and appearance, and must rise in revolt against Claude. "I'm longing to stop this nonsense of yours. It gets on my nerves. I'm tired of it." "Do as you like, Cordelia, but you'll lose your contract with the Blue Room, and they'll never have you back at the Ambassadeurs. Isn't it much better to be quiet like this and keep to the floor? Give it up by all means, but then you must learn to throw yourself from the balcony, or twirl round with one foot in someone else's collar.

But I don't care, you can do what you like!" "But just tell me, Claude, must I wear this hat all the afternoon? After all, we are only going shopping!" "Do whatever you like, I tell you. But I am going to keep to the poster, or my living's gone."

In fact, in this poster, their heads were put so close together as to be almost embarrassing, and they looked like a brother and sister of supreme and unenviable social distinction reverted, by some act of witchcraft, into their days of childhood; for who has ever seen a grown-up brother and sister behave like this? Such wistful tenderness of blue eyes and fair moustache, such an answer of blue eyes and fair hair to that masculine pretence. This was all very well, but the nursery was the place for it, and how should a moustache be in a nursery?

That very afternoon there had been trouble, I think, for when they came downstairs to start off on their shopping, Claude in his grey sombrero and Cordelia in sober and trailing black, they went towards the cashier's desk with a pride that had a little protest and a little resentment about it. There was ever an air of mystery about the few words they exchanged at the desk, though these were really some whispered confidences about the day's luncheon and the amount that should be deducted from their week's account. But there was a bigger treat in store this evening.

They came out from the lift in full evening dress and began to walk through the lounge towards the dining-room. Their duties in the roof-garden did not begin till midnight, but every evening they dined in the restaurant and by special arrangement were given a table where they were easily seen but not conspicuous. Indeed, to the ingenuous-minded it might seem that this

tender romance was smiled upon by the management, so that they were placed not too near the band where they could talk to their heart's content. Then, but only for about one tune out of every two, they got up from the table and danced together. People dining in the restaurant for the first time would wonder who this idyllic pair come among them could be, and would make conjectures as to whether they were brother and sister, or a pair of lovers. But Claude and Cordelia were absorbed in the music, and they seemed to look on the other diners, if they happened even to notice them, as the merest canaille. It was difficult to think of them as having any lives apart from their dances. They were a prince and princess from a fairy-story, that was the idea ; and only the grossest of mortals would have known this was their livelihood and that they were not dancing here purely from light-heartedness.

But I should be creating a false impression if I ascribed more than a passing importance to Claude and Cordelia, for they were only incidents and not by any means the chief ingredients in the atmosphere that I am trying to recreate. They were alien to it themselves, thrown among what they thought of as canaille compared with the lacquered and chattering shapes they would have liked to dance for.

An extraordinary background of noise and glitter builds itself behind them and begins to hide their forms, so that they are seen through it with just the elegance and reticence they would have liked. The mouths of these dancing-halls roar out their music into the street and are as noisily melodious as the hell for which Offenbach wrote his music. This particular hell had several twists to its corridor so that the music dinned upon first one

ear and then the other, and altogether its approach was like a passage in a tube-station. There were many arrivals, and the time that these took in giving up their coats gave an opportunity to notice the jaded and listless air of the cloak-room attendants which spoke of how little they had to expect, and of what heights and extremes were necessary to wake them out of their impassivity.

Once this barrier had been passed a new and peculiar world was reached, and it left one strong and prevailing impression upon the mind. This was a limitless extension of all the bounds of fiction, as though the possibilities of this art had become suddenly multiplied into infinity. But the fatigue and inertness of the guardians to this new world acted as the hardest criticism upon it. Nevertheless it lay here to be explored, but with a terrible horror at the end of all its corridors, however comic or burlesque might be the passages leading to that finality. All the needful dramatis personæ were here assembled, for the newness of these discoveries had not yet worn off sufficiently for them to be dispersed in a general manner over all quarters of the city, and like the proselytes to a new religion they still collected nightly in the catacombs.

There would appear to have been a regular staff attached to the establishment, rather in the manner of the Italian actors of impromptu comedy, who, we may suppose, signed on with their manager, the general lines of their masks being known and understood, but its details left to be developed by them as occasion and opportunity arose. There would be Harlequin, Pantaloon, the soubrette, and a number of others; and here we find a company of the same kind engaged and practising their vocation, but occupied, at our moment of entrance, at the bar, where they were drinking with the

management, receiving instructions, and discussing things of the night before. One of their number was going round from table to table selling signed postcards of the company so that it was easy to learn their names and memorize their appearances.

If the word "respectable" may yet be used in this connexion, we might call this the respectable side of the German criminal world that rose up and thrived from the warm ashes of the war. It signalized itself in extreme instances by a series of crimes of unprecedented and haunting frightfulness, which can be collected and exemplified under one head by the mention of Hartmann, the butcher of Hanover. The persons concerned in this case, and in all the others of the series that have occurred in Germany, have been extremely young in years, and it is probably safe to think that these equivocal and heterogeneous figures here gathered together, spent their daytime behind the counters of shops, and in surroundings where their nocturnal activities can hardly have been suspected. I suppose they hurried home through the twilight, and changed in cheap rooms into the travesties that they wore for this second and leading half of their lives.

It was possible to turn these histories back into themselves and to imagine the strangest tragedies, beginning, as no sense of humour could deny, from a comical, if distorted and bloated, start. Everything concerned with them had something of that feeling with which the acts of insects must be regarded, there being the strongest tinge of horror and disgust about each prompting of their senses. It was conceivable, for instance, that someone falling in love with one of these unreal ghosts, and who did not realize the deception of which he was the

victim, for the most sincere tributes are due to their skilfulness in disguise, might find himself the next day wanting to buy a pair of gloves or a hat. He would walk down the street till the right shop was reached, and enter it to find himself being served by the sinister, but changed, spectre whose embodiment he had been admiring but a few hours before. Following upon this there would be a lapse of days spent in visiting alternately the two, earthly and ethereal, contacts with this phantom, days occupied with this extraordinary and sordid myth of the present, and in a set of situations that only a minor deity could be expected to surmount.

This was among the most simple of all those possibilities, and behind it was a Rabelaisian world augmented, to speak of these different tones and chords as though they were an orchestra, by limitless travesties and masks, till fiction at that far end of its orbit ceased to be concerned with life, and returned into the mythology out of which it has begun. Here, most certainly, was fiction lifted out of the drawing-room where it has been confined, and its likeness to an Academy picture has gone together with the grand piano and shaded lamp that are the symbols for both. The scenes and characters are too crude and large for any ordinary treatment at the hands of a phalanx of young women-novelists, and the future is troubled and broken into a hundred uneven surfaces.

The most ordinary vistas of life become complicated and obscure. What should have been a straight street leading to a happy ending is here darkened and made ghostly with the shadows of a number of statues that cannot be painted in the picture. They throw these shadows in order to trip the feet, and where closer

inquiry has been made it is seen that these are really authentic, dead worlds come to life.

There can have been but few times when so copious a material has lain ready for treatment, though, to do justice to its strangeness, the novelists' forces would need to be increased, as I have suggested, by some qualities of the entomologist. These two talents, working together, would have the whole of this new world thrown open to them and I could think of no better beginning than to start the whole series at the first cold month of the year. The winter was, even then, not more than a few weeks in front with its frightful menace of fireless rooms and foodless days. This dancing-hall was, by contrast with nearly every home in Berlin, of a suffocating heat, and the first wave of influenza would affect almost a daily decimation, for no one of these people assembled here could have the very slightest sum of vitality left over from the strength they had to employ in keeping such perpetual late hours. The stories could begin, then, as though with siege and famine, and I was still thinking of their possibilities and envying the writer who had the gift to give them life long after I had left the place.

Some of the more salient of the characters stayed in the mind and nothing could drive them away. A small dark woman in black with hair brushed straight, a man's collar and tie and the kind of armoured bulkiness suited to an essentially masculine black-beetle, but who had allied this to an onerously hearty and cheerful manner, and who danced all the evening with a young girl—but was it a girl?—whose dark eyes and eyebrows to a bell-shaped head of flaxen hair made this seem a wig, worn for a minor deception where so much was travesty.

A horrible and Satanic Algerian; a young girl in a German dress and hat which seemed more strange still from their odd conventionality in such surroundings; and finally those two extraordinary brothers. These were dressed in well-cut suits of a nearly similar pattern as though both had been selected together, and their waisted figures gave them the air of male impersonators, though, when this was investigated, their sex was quite impossible to determine and they may have been equally two sisters masquerading as brothers, or not brothers and sisters at all but merely two persons—whether men or women none could tell from such evidence to the eyes—grown like each other as might two chameleons always associated with the same rotting leaves and rank decay. Now and again they would be called upon for an exhibition dance, and we can take our leave of them as they walk into the middle of the floor and start to the music, while we notice their peculiar and fixed smiles, part pride, part defence, seeming to express their mutual and inalienable love for each other and the kind of comic secret that was theirs.

So we get back to the hotel just in time to see another and less perplexing progress. This was the transition of Claude and Cordelia from the dining-room to the night-club on the roof of the hotel. It was midnight and their engagement was about to begin. By now their identity was known to all the diners in the restaurant, and as they walked out they were stared at with a different kind of attention to that they had drawn to themselves in the earlier evening. Now, it was less kind and more critical; and as they went out, people stopped talking to watch them, for their secret was known and there was little left to be said about them. The fairy-story

was broken, and the prince and princess had become public entertainers.

There, for the duration of life's realities, we must leave them, though, later on, their symbolical importance may be stressed. I never saw them again; I never watched them dance except in those wilfully unprofessional moments during dinner; and I left Berlin the next morning feeling that Claude and Cordelia were witness, more than evidence, to the strange and new lives that I have hinted at, so that, indeed, they could be used to tell their experiences in some future dialogue. I went away from Berlin, and I never got to Hamburg, where my instinct told me I should go in order to see these things in their new and authentic setting against the sharp, emphatic architecture of that city. In Hamburg the eyes are not distracted by so many signs of Imperial Germany, and the unstable and trembling plutocracy has put its messages of no pity and no compromise into the very shells in which it moves. Not having seen them, my interpretation of their meaning must lose half its strength, but its general accuracy cannot be questioned; and I felt that Claude and Cordelia were my emissaries into this fresh experience.

Having sent them out upon this errand we need not think of them again until they have returned from it; and we leave them in the fast darkening autumn days. Rain and snow are near, and every evening the lit lamps have come a little closer to the flat noon of this declining year.

For this, and for the usual reasons, it was not a gay journey back to London. The streets were full of new faces and queer voices; the National Gallery and the British Museum were thronged with Americans, deriving,

it may be feared, but little benefit from these guys left over from so many dead and vanished cultures. The fact that these two institutions were visited on one and the same day should in itself be a proof of how little else there was to do. The afternoon was spent in wandering about after this fashion, and even the familiar figures in any shop entered were reported by apparent strangers as being away on holiday at some seaside town, or in Devonshire. But walking home, on my way down King's Road, as I passed an artists' colourman, there emerged from the shop-door, the sombreroed shade of Mr. Carl Corder, and I found myself being taken just round the corner to his studio.

C. C.: So you're back from Berlin. This time I'm afraid there's no chance of our meeting abroad, because you've come back and we're just off. No! It's under the archway and down this long passage.

S. S.: I don't think I know these studios.

C. C.: This is the one I've always had, and though we live in Cornwall I keep it on as a *pied à terre* in London. Put your things down on that chair. Now let me offer you a drink. Some vermouth? I'd suggest tea, but that depends on Hilda, and she's only coming up from the cottage to-night with our luggage. Well, how's that book getting on?

S. S.: It's well over half done, thanks very much. But it's taken me two years and it's sad work living so much in the past, though I can't tell you how much I prefer it to this present world of money beetles and newspaper peers, holiday-snaps, young lady novelists and, as the highest possible achievement, since it is so little use hoping for a good picture or fine building, some business man's prose—a particularly British invention,

this, since we are the first and only race to produce good writers who are never artists: Dickens, to begin with; but I won't mention any more names.

C. C.: These are a poet's grumblings.

S. S.: Of course they are, and that's what a poet's for. Thank God, I've always been outside life, and it's too late to drag me into it now! I know I should pull the piano into the corner and turn on the shaded lamp, but I'm not going to do it. Everyone can be their own Galsworthy, but I won't be conscripted for it.

C. C.: Of course you like everything screwed into the kind of perspective that suits your imagery, don't you? You wouldn't like any subject that stood flat and square before you.

S. S.: What nonsense! I like either a good photograph or a good portrait, and I find neither of these in the books we mean. What I hate and abominate is any attempt at an average. A lot of writers seem to imagine that realistic treatment means the selection of a boring subject and then the choice of the most uninteresting method in which to portray it. An interesting or beautiful subject paints or writes itself; and, for its opposite, why were men born poets or painters? But I mustn't be snared into aesthetics, for I know next to nothing about them; you wouldn't want a pianist to make a musical critic, would you? In fact you'd feel suspicious of him if he were.

C. C.: Yes. I see the point of that. But you know it's very bad for you to live entirely on artifice. Your own life can't be either so happy, or so unhappy, that you have nothing to say about it.

S. S.: All right. I'll tell you what I'll do. You're away for a fortnight, aren't you? I'll see what I can

do with the next two weeks, and I'll show you what I've done when you come back. Where do you go, this time ?

C. C.: Oh ! Amboise, Brantôme, Chinon, a few little places of the kind. I shall be sketching away all the time you are writing. But don't get up and go now. What are you doing this evening ? Can't you have some dinner with me ? Hilda will be back soon after it's over, and then we can all three have a long talk.

S. S.: I'm sorry to say I'm already engaged. I'm seeing my only other friend left in London, beside yourself.

C. C.: So this is good-bye—until those two weeks are over. Well, try and do your best for me, and we'll often be thinking and talking of you as we sit at our easels.

In a few minutes I was back at home.

III

SIESTA

A LITTLE wind, riding with the sunlight, beat the blind to and fro, and this rattling just served to prevent me from falling alseep as I lay on my bed whiling away the last spare moments after my bath.

That rattling blind acted also as a shuttle, weaving remembered facts in and out of my dreams. In the long spaces that these made out of a few seconds each tap was a shutter flung open or closed. I saw things lying in ribbed and spined light, or hidden almost in their alternation of thick and mute darkness. All kinds of emotions played between these two extremes, and every one of them seemed to have for its aim the epitomizing of that dead summer, hardly flung aside yet so near were its last hours.

Yes, the middle of September had come. It swept up the summer as the tidal bar thunders up some great river. London was flooded with new faces and queer voices. The British Museum and the National Gallery were thronged with Americans.

Certainly this feeling of lassitude was most lovely. I was carried forward on each little wave of sleep till it broke and my thoughts were troubled in the foam. Indeed, this kind of dangerless surf lay just in front of

sleep, but I never quite reached to it, and was only lifted up and cooled by the spent fever in trying to reach to that quiet.

The emotions played a gentle music, trying to lull me in this way over the barrier into sleep, but that same wind outside, with its rattling of the blind against the window, prevented this, and I lay without strength enough to get up and settle that noise, unable to do anything but listen to my sentiments, which became embodied by this conspiracy to soothe me into sleep.

There, once it was reached, I should have enjoyed the sort of freedom that no one has ever known, awake, for the boundaries of fact are completely arbitrary in this condition and there can be a stableful of clouds to ride away upon with anyone whom your fancy chooses out from the mythology of daily life. There they are bedded upon this white and drifting snow, or the same quick machinery that gave them possibility invents some other background for this fruition, and a maze of green lanes will spring up in an instant to hide the sunburnt and gypsy shadows that are waiting there.

But this paradise was cut short and cancelled by time, which woke me and was censor to all I might have seen there. The hour was getting late, and this sense, like a kind of conscience, kept me awake and eventually pulled me right out of any association with these twilight figures.

I woke up and tumbled on to my feet, falling into the sleeves and legs of any clothes that lay near to hand, for my evening clothes had been lying on the bed ready for me to inflate them with my breath and body. Since I am the Mercury or Harlequin of these pages, designed, that is to say, to run into the world with the messages of my

own feelings or, on the other hand, to mock and parody their sentiment, I must set myself, here and now, against a mirror, in order to frame in my substance. And what could be an easier place for this than my bedroom? I like to emphasize, or excuse, any good luck that is mine by a play of discomfort; so, besides a bed, two or three chairs, and a mirror, there is not much else to notice about my room. I have, at times, a genuine small melancholy which is elaborately fostered by my histrionic feeling. I am worried, though this eunuch age need not really make me jealous, at what seems to me the small amount of work that I produce; or I feel lonely and try to palliate this with a friendship that has a suspicion of purchase about its fast and easy build.

But I am half-dressed now and fully awake. Yet all the time I was dressing, the easy machinery that prompted my imaginings, the tapping drum that was all the music to my puppet-show, kept up its insistent beat upon the window, and it was difficult for phantoms not to move to that live monotony. Its insistence, made from so many breaths of wind, brought everything fresh and cool into my mind, and I saw the fair hair and heard the cold voice that had shaped and moulded my last few weeks.

There was no doubt that Joaquina was cold—very cold—indeed chilly. Nothing pleasant or unpleasant had the slightest power to ruffle her, and she was able to pass, unscathed, through the most severe family storms and the most poignant stresses of affection. Nor could it be said exactly that she did not take her share in any of these troubles, for she certainly answered her mother with sufficient sharpness, and in my dealings with her I could not complain of her not being interested in our situation; but, all the same, she seemed to lead

a life of her own with which she would allow no interference. What she meant this life to be, and what her aims were in trying to keep it separate from so many of the things out of which it was really composed, it was difficult to conjecture.

As I opened my bedroom door there was a rush of wind, and the blind blew still louder upon the window. Its violence made me realize that this would go on all the time I was out and for the remaining two hours of daylight; and wherever I might happen to be during this time the thought of it would carry me back to the memories it had evoked while I lay trying to sleep, for in their efforts to lull me and drown that insistent noise my senses had conjured up all the most pleasant things lying within their reach in order to carry me over that barrier into their grasp.

Even to think of them now meant a complete break with any other thing occupying my mind at the moment, and while other matters held my attention this would still be here.

The same wind would blow the dying sunlight into my room with a noise like the sea sounding in the intervals between the rappings of its fitful heart. Just at this same hour, the most beautiful time of the whole day, the sea is still fluttering and smiling, though everyone at the seaside is indoors at his evening meal. Its huge, blue plain wants ships more than ever, then, and there is an indescribable poignant calm in which nothing else is of any moment except the vibrant and chiming surges. By the time the world is abroad again it is all over; and, in the same way, eating and the other people eating with me would destroy my mood of sensibility, and the only thing that could be endured after it was the theatre.

There, at any rate, artifice has managed a successful parody, and I could see as many hints at Joaquina as I pleased, placing her, as she had been that day in the swing, along a chain of images under the boughs, or masquerading, even among these stage people, in a travesty that put their ineffectiveness to shame.

IV

AT THE PLAY

MUCH to my surprise, and contrary to all her own rules, Joaquina was actually waiting for me in the lobby of the theatre when I arrived. It was unprecedented, and could only be because she was going away next morning for two months. But the piece had already begun ; loud music came down the draught from a swing-door, and we hurried into our places.

In the theatre of to-day anything is better than words, and in order to avoid them as far as possible I had gone to the opposite extreme and chosen a musical comedy, preferring music, however bad, to those verbal settings of an Academy picture which the genius of our young dramatists produces every time it sets to work. There were more words even in this piece than I had expected, but at least their horror seared itself into the flesh in a new fashion, and the raw crudity of the American mind seemed better than our own native inanity.

I felt tortured by an unusually bad joke.

" I hope you don't mind this, Joaquina ? "

" I can forgive it when the music begins again. But they're not acting at all to-night. They're just playing tricks on each other."

Owing to the season, the actors were suffering under a

peculiar emotion, for the old year ends emphatically and categorically at the end of July, and nothing is ever the same again afterwards.

The new year begins and a whole new atmosphere distils itself, but for a few weeks it has not sufficient strength to carry things along with its own velocity, and so August is a calm where one wind dies away and another has not yet begun. Actors are more subject to this feeling than any other class of people, for their plays begin either in the very mouth of this Sargasso, or else they have just fairly started before it sets in, and they are left floundering in uncertainty between two particular and definite horizons, neither of which is within reach. In this case the latter alternative had happened; the play was by now some six weeks old, and already I had been forced by fate into watching it twice.

The theatre was still crowded, as they often are through September, but filled with a mass of people who composed an entirely different audience from the ordinary. When I came here before it had been the conventional house at its most typical moment of complacency and self-satisfaction, using this piece as a kind of mirror to their own ambitions for themselves; fancying themselves if humorous, handsome, or pretty, as filling their own rôles and being their own selves upon the stage, or, if more modest in their self-valuation, as seeing so many examples there, behind the footlights, of how to develop and fortify their own personality without exaggeration or affectation into a definite improvement upon its present state.

To-night it was not at all the same kind of person sitting in the theatre. They were from the provinces, or the more distant suburbs, and they had come here in

order to drink in the ways they had read of in the social columns of the newspapers. They were, therefore, more attentively silent and more demonstratively pleased. But their applause held little satisfaction for the actors. By now, for lack of other interests, they had begun to find the virtues in themselves.

So different was the audience from that to which they were accustomed that it was like acting in a foreign country, and this feeling gave them licence to carry over some meaning into their words above that amount of it which they expected the audience to understand. This knowledge made their antics of double importance to anyone who knew what was going on behind that façade of words. Besides being in each other's company the whole evening at the theatre, they would spend the whole day together and have supper after the performance at the same table in a restaurant. This state of affairs never came at any other time, for even when on tour in some provincial town there was always too much to see to, and they were never long enough in any one place for the whole machinery of life to be running so smoothly as to require no attention.

The comedy was lavishly produced, and one of the Harkers' very best scenes held the attention with a strength that was only the just tribute to its extreme realistic brilliance.(5) It was a Mormon house in the State of Utah ; the building formed the left side of the stage, and the whole space that the boards took up was given over to the garden. This had a low wall running round it, over which there was a view of the mountains with a green Alpine lake in the foreground, edged on its far side with a wood of fir trees that ran up their thinning spears into the sides of the hills. The actual garden was

completely full of flowers, bedded out apparently for the occasion ; and rather to the right of the stage stood a beautiful fruit tree in full bloom, looking exactly like one of the flowering trees from a Persian illuminated manuscript.

The open space between the flowers and the fruit tree held five or six girls in it, and they were prettier than ever Mormon or Persian can have attained to, while their dress emphasized this with a fine abandon that deserved a better master than either of these voluptuaries.

The music to which they were dancing had a bastard virtuosity about it which derives from the excellence of the piano-playing. It is born out of Rubinstein and out of the more meretricious Liszt. In order to be true to the first of these suggested parents it must be Jewish, and without that blood this kind of invention fades and withers from its own weakness. But so long as there is really this strain in its paternity nothing can exceed the power that it has of interpreting the dangerous banality of such an existence as that hinted at among these flowers. It holds all the bridge-heads leading from the impossible into the realization of such scenes, and once it has started you can walk along into their full scope.

It has, also, this peculiar property, that these essential strains of modernity coming out of a new social system and a recent emigration and transfusion of races that has never been exceeded at any period of history, have the power to catch up and turn anything that they touch away from its natural atmosphere into a complete parallel, a true accompaniment to themselves. So this scenery of an extinct realism, changes into the ideal setting, the

adept background, and these girls who would have been pretty in any dairy from any fairy-story, appear, suddenly, in spite of their English type, as the select interpreters of this Jewish, or Negroid-Russian dream.

On this occasion there were no less than three pianos placed side by side in the orchestra, and they sustained a steady and decisive masculine din above the noisy flowers and the garish words; in fact, they disposed everything into their own arbitrary patterns and were definitely in control of the whole affair.

This was one of the moments in life when the modern, far from lagging behind, ran by the side of, and really overtook, the past. Indeed, these conventional prettinesses had not only life in them, beside which anything dead and beautiful must look cold, but, also, in their easy acceptance, they achieved something far simpler and finer than the ugly obscurity which passes for modern in so much of the music and painting of our day. When every piece of music and every picture which has not this contortion of style is genuinely and really hopeless, this sudden revelation of something that is good without any of these drawbacks, and that has a kind of easy and fluent poetry about it, induces a feeling of comfort and relief. Of course this was all spoilt and shattered in a moment by a bad joke, only to be restored again when the music had started once more.

It was the sort of harmony for which I was searching, and it is its absence that makes life forced and bitter in nearly all its moments. I wanted this sort of thing transferred out of what I could only see with my own eyes and hear with my own ears; I would like it to be carried beyond these long-distance senses into some nearer contact with myself, where I could touch it and

feel its movements. In fact, I wanted it living beside me, whatever it might be, and perhaps I was prepared to be disappointed in the end so long as it had been by my side long enough for me to understand and study some of its secrets.

Meanwhile it was a sad relief for me to place my own strivings after this ideal as near as possible to the natural achievement of it that I saw going on before my eyes. I sat and watched it, while I mingled my own phantoms with those real things that lay in front of me.

Joaquina seemed to move among these other girls in a freedom and intimacy that changed their whole aspect and made them into school-children; but they were pupils of a convent school, and I felt myself looking on at their studied innocence from the safe shelter of this wall that kept them out of reach and out of harm. It was one of those cases, so often lighted upon by the French artists of two centuries ago, where guilelessness is the secret of seduction. But the whole of this scene changed before more could be made of its opportunities.

The new one portrayed a room in, presumably, a yacht club, for out of some five bow-windows in the semi-circular back of the set the sea could be seen, and the centre window, which was really a door and led in from the balcony outside, showed a great expanse of the blue and heaving main with several yachts tacking at a dangerous angle across it.

A cold and salt breeze seemed to blow through that door, and it had its origin from the band. The tune they were playing summed up the whole situation as quickly as a caption. The girls who had been dancing only a moment before by that Alpine pasture had now arrived at this very different venue, and Joaquina took her place

as easily among them this second time, for her golden hair and Northern skin suited the waves just as well; indeed, her hair was a tidy and gleaming casque protecting her against the wind.

It guarded her, too, against the full, insidious meaning of the music so that she was now a little apart from the others, but she faded out from the scene, which took on a deeper note of realism with her disappearance.

There was a great amount of over-acting and over-emphasis that evening, for reasons that have already been suggested. This had a most peculiar effect upon the inanities of the piece, for behind their futile and shallow meaning it built up something that can only be described as a series of mirrors in which I could see the backs of the actors, their necks and heads straining more than I would have imagined to be possible from the false gentility of their manner when seen from the ordinary angle.

Here, in that double or second world in which I watched them, they were acting for a different audience from that among which I was numbered and with an extravagant energy that showed they were competing, not with the absurd persons they were supposed to be portraying, but with their own true selves armed with each other's guile and knowing each other's secrets. This gave them an earnestness of purpose that they never attained to on ordinary evenings.

They had got back into the garden. It was lit with as many lamps as it had flowers; the same house made its appearance once more, but seen this time from the right instead of the left; in fact, it was another side of the garden, and the whole scene was nearly roofed in by a great bough of a cedar tree that gave almost as much shade as a tent.

All the familiar figures came on that in their short life of two hours had become such a part of existence. It was just the same sort of evening as that lying outside the theatre, and this scene gave a miniature of its feeling and at the same time showed the best way of dealing with its rigours. If only this small thing could be projected into the great void that lay beyond it, what a paradise of a summer evening this would make!

But no effects in life could ever be so rehearsed as these, and, if they were, that very sense would destroy their quality so that only people looking on and not taking a part in them could find any pleasure in the spectacle; indeed, the proof of this was the feverish over-emphasis of the performance we were watching. So close was my attention that I had become involved, myself, as something more than a mere spectator, and their feelings were communicated to me so that I shared in their ennui and could appreciate their frantic efforts to find an interest in the banal words and the conventional scenes in which they were doomed to pass their evening.

I liked the distortion and emphasis of their mood because it overlapped from the play into their own lives, and I could see things in them that were beyond and above the amount of acting for which they had been engaged. My very interest in these scenes brings out, perhaps, certain points in my own character; for I would not be in search of such easy and vapid amusement if my own life was altogether charged and brimming with those qualities that I lacked and had come here to search for; and my keen scrutiny betrayed an anxiety to become involved in some adventure.

I wanted to arrive at some attitude where I could imitate the apparent carelessness of what I saw before

me, and carry it into terms of ordinary life. Until such an adventure started, I could do no better than try to see what lay behind these few hours that were their livelihood. In doing this, the mirrors over which I found myself dangling, revealed themselves in all their depth and profundity, with, as is naturally the case in a looking-glass, the image of the person making the inquiry ready to answer from the bottom of the pool when it is least expected and a still greater depth might be presumed.

What did they do with all the long hours of daylight ? The dwindled morning broken into two halves by breakfast, and with its first half never seen by them except at an early start in the provinces, when it climbed like a static blue dome above the open end of the railway platform in those few moments before the train started. All this part of it, as well as all the rest of it, was doomed, condemned already to be wasted. Just now it was sure to be motionless and without any sign of life, but on other mornings it was decked out with a few clouds like sailing-ships, with banks of cloud-like shoals of sand, or it would even assemble these different images into a set of ribs and bones for its own skeleton, which hung still, or drifted very slowly, shaking asunder, over that immense journey.

On such days as this it tries to draw attention to its changes by a rattling upon the window, or stretches down a long hand of light between the clouds, and gives a sudden stab into the room followed by an answering darkness. This mood, with the quick limelight changing into complete and utter black, is one that mates very well with the constitutional sleepiness of a profession that can never get to bed till after midnight, and its alterna-

tions would match the series of little sleeps drifted into after breakfast had been brought in, and while that unrelished meal was growing cold.

Luncheon, for this simple reason, was far more like breakfast, and signalled the real start of the day. They would go very late to some fashionable restaurant for this purpose, and now this part of their lives, spent away from the theatre, becomes just as curious and unreal in its procedure. For these habits of life are the creation of the last twenty years, while young men of an exactly parallel talent and advantage to myself have existed for some twenty-five centuries, at least. I might equally well have been writing my poems with a stylus on a wax tablet while I lay under an olive tree and watched the nodding asphodels and the goats climbing among the rocks; have imitated this same mood in the difficult rhyme and difficult script of an age which had few flowers beyond the rose, the carnation and the blossoming fruit tree, and kept these jealously guarded behind a girdle of walls; or have written odes to the farded cheeks and swan breasts of that last age of a non-Gothick romanticism when nothing was left unhidden or unexpected that could by any device of ingenuity grow into a conceit or simile. But why enlarge upon the rest of the day and try to draw out its hours into a length that, in any case, can never compete with the lives of whole numbers of people as they are seen reduced, but without a sign of compression, in the few hours at a theatre?

This may be a confession of how little difference there is between realism and artifice, and of how difficult it is to choose between them for accuracy; but it is in this kind of half-light, of neither the one nor the other, that we must move through these pages occupied with

genuine feelings or pretences of mood, and so no excuse need be offered for any overlapping of the shadows.

When I turned my attention back to it I found the piece was nearly over, and I could guess the unsatisfied mood in which its conclusion would leave me. This hazard reached its fulfilment a few minutes later when all the audience who had been in the theatre were emptied into the starry night. This was lit by an unreal light apart from that given forth by its myriad pin-points, and down the street at the only point where the horizon could be seen, the sky flickered and shook a little at its edges. It might be that strange thing, the Northern Lights, or perhaps it was simply the glare of the town, but whichever it may have been, this phenomenon served to strengthen and intensify the mood of the theatre.

Anything, and every possibility, had crawled up nearer under the loose tent-flaps of the sky, and now lay close at hand waiting for its chance. It was a phase of time that could not last long; and Joaquina and I began walking home.

To-morrow she would be gone, and there would be nothing to do, no one to see, and hardly a person even to think of, as everyone was away, but not for long enough to make their absence a matter for anything deeper than the most passing regret. But the night air turned this little impermanence into something long and lasting. It held ready its romantic paraphernalia of casement and guitar, and even arc-lamp and motor-omnibus could not hide them.

V

CASEMENT AND GUITAR

WE decided to walk a little way. Motor-cars and great crowds of people were pouring in and out of Piccadilly Circus along Shaftesbury Avenue, and there was the same noise and confusion down Regent Street. But the two or three streets between Regent Street and Bond Street were silent and dark enough to be a temptation, and we chose one of them in order to have a moment's lull.

Down towards the end of it an open door poured light on to the street. At the same time, lights were streaming out from a row of three windows at the top of the house, and there were the sounds of voices and music.

We went quickly past, each of us thinking how dull a party in the late summer this must be ; but we were too engrossed in our last few minutes together to pay it any attention, and here was the door of Joaquina's house before we had time to realize that separation was upon us.

As I was coming on my way back again, a heavily-built woman, whom it was difficult to see properly because of the darkness, was airing a couple of dogs, walking them up and down by that open door we had noticed. As she was ahead of me and had arrived nearly in front of the doorway she turned round on her beat, and one of her two dogs took this opportunity to escape from her,

trailing its leash along the ground. Instinctively I put my foot down on the end of its lead, stooped to pick it up with my hand, and advanced on the substantial woman to hand her back her dog.

"Oh! Thank you very much. You're a late comer," she said, and I hesitated in some doubt, because I saw that she either expected, or pretended to expect, that I had just arrived at the door and intended to go upstairs.

"I'm sorry. So you aren't a friend of my son's. I thought you must be on your way here."

"Well, I'm pleased to have been able to catch your dog for you. It's lucky that both of them didn't take it into their heads to run away together."

But my joke brought out a vein of pleasant, if vaguely bibulous, humour in her, and I could see immediately that her mistake had been a genuine one.

"Yes, it's lucky. I'm too old now to move about as fast as that. But though you haven't been asked, do please come upstairs. Don't think me rude to press you in this way, but my son and his friends would be delighted, and, anyway, I'm his mother, and will be responsible for you."

"All right. I should like to very much."

And still slightly in spite of myself I went up the steps with her into the house.

There were no coats or hats in the hall, and we began going upstairs at once. The ground floor and the first floor must be offices, I thought to myself. My new friend, from the way in which she was airing her dogs. must live here, and I imagined that she and her son had rooms above some office or business that belonged to them. I had quickly and rightly given up any idea of there being anything at all sinister in her invitation, and

I panted upstairs after her, a little curious about this new world into which I was on the point of breaking.

On the way I noticed the name of a new weekly paper that had just started, in big white letters on the glass panel of a door on the second landing, and my inquisitiveness told me that her son must be the editor of this rather struggling new paper and that I should find they lived on the floor above this.

I was right. When I got to the door on the landing above there was a small visiting card pinned on to the woodwork with " Editor " written in pencil, and a short notice to the effect that this was his private address and that letters or people coming on business must go to the floor below between certain hours.

All this looked safe enough; and I followed her through a little hall into a square and brightly-lit room.

For all its yellow walls and shadeless lamps, this party had a drab and nasty-smelling air to it which suggested to the mind cups of strong tea left half-drunk in a bedroom into late in the morning. However, the disarray was of a more alcoholic nature than this simile depicts, and a great deal of tousled and arty talk was in progress. I shook hands with my friend's son, a kind-faced, weak young man who was evidently trying to develop his manner out of nervousness into the critical silence and saline wit that he thought an editor should possess. So far he was keeping his comments down in number, and seemed resolved not to give away any information. Why should he talk much when writing was his *métier?* All the same, his voice could be heard denying that certain well-known names in painting had even sufficient importance to be said to exist. Nor, need it be said, was anyone else present trying to defend them.

I was given little opportunity of talking to him. His mother felt responsible for me, and was also by now keenly interested in finding out who I was. We were able to establish several points of contact in mutual like or dislike of certain painters or critics. In fact, she knew my name, once she had extracted it from me, though there was obviously not much of a label attached to it in her mind and she would have to search about and ask questions of other people before it meant more than its mere sound to her.

There were no painters in the room, but every other profession to do with painting except that of being an artist was represented. Besides the editor-son there were critics, gallery-owners, exhibition-secretaries, and one or two of the young women who do all the work and dawdle through the long hours in a picture gallery at the desk, in front of a heap of catalogues and a marked price list.

Presently when the mother had gone upstairs to bed I moved away from the corner where I had been sitting with her. I went over and sat next to the editor, who was in the centre of a little group. Among the listeners were one of these secretaries, and a most beautiful young girl, who was obviously a friend of hers. She was so silent that it was evident she was the only person besides myself who was in no way connected with pictures or the picture trade. At the same time she was well known to them all, and although she talked so little I was able to see that she was a person of importance to them. I wondered if this was simply because of her good looks; and the more I looked at her the more beautiful she became.

She looked little more than twenty years old, and owing

to her silence it was next to impossible to make out anything more than that about her, for she had the kind of mask-like face at which it is the most exquisite pleasure merely to look, while the moment speech begins you know that the mask will break and a new expression about which it is useless to conjecture will make its appearance.

To begin with, the whole mouth must alter and keep on changing with its words; while the immobile lips make up at least a half of that continuity of which we are speaking, and it is no use thinking of a mask without its mouth. It was the whole point of the Venetian domino that the fresh and natural mouth you hoped, or hoped not, to recognize, lay underneath that uniformly pallid shield to the eyes. But in this case the mask had, so to speak, to unmask itself before it was possible to form the slightest opinion about its wearer. This could only be achieved by engaging her in conversation.

I led a desperate hunt through all the possible subjects in my head, and then said—but to the editor and not to her—something about how much more exciting a time of year this was than the conventional May and June of summer, when I felt that such an adventure as had befallen me this evening could never have been possible. This same party, given then, would have been too full to allow room for a single stranger; or, on the other hand, it would have had to be organized on the most guarded basis and almost in secrecy, so that, then again, I could have had no chance like that of this evening.

Everyone seemed to agree to this.

The elder of the two secretaries thought that by the things I might have missed I meant my introduction to her, and then made a joke out of pretending to believe

this. No one saw the underlying truth in what she pretended to pretend. There was no flicker of a smile on any face, not even on that I was trying to approach and get nearer to by means of these feinted conventionalities.

I must try something else.

"Do you suppose I shall ever see any of you again? We should have an engagement to meet once in every five years, like the survivors one reads of in the newspaper, who gather on the steps of St. Paul's and then go off to a melancholy dinner to discuss those of their number who have died since the last occasion. And they know no more about each other than I know of any of you, or than you know of me!"

"And how does it get into the papers?" (This was the editor.) "Aren't they all really just members of the staff?"

"Why not let's test this," I said. "Won't this young lady you have never introduced me to, dine with me to-night, and we will dine together every night through September until we know all about each other, and until our compact always to dine together gets into the papers? But there would be more of a newspaper story in it if we engage never to ask each other's name, and never to meet any of you again until our compact has broken down, so that even your channel of information is cut off from us. What do you say to that?"

"I will dine with you to-morrow, but never again."

But I was too slow to catch any change of expression that I could remember, and so this immediate purpose of my manœuvres was put off till to-morrow.

Then we arranged where to meet, and the party began to break up. I walked home, thankful to get away from

that evening of banalities, but a little curious about the next day, with, perhaps, a little more than mere curiosity in my expectation.

This was how the adventure started that I had felt was waiting for me all that evening, and, indeed, ever since the hot and easeless afternoon. Certainly it had not the sort of epical opening to it that I would have chosen, but at any rate this was the beginning; this was what the starry night had brought me, and this was its casement and guitar. I felt grateful, but with not too much enthusiasm. In fact, it seemed to me, up to that time, as though the starry sky might have done better for me.

VI

LOVE SCENE

WE met next evening according to arrangement. The new horizon I had arrived at became quickly crowded with statues. In fact, my interest in this possible futurity almost prevented my studying the model of these hieratic suggestions, and I was so intent on examining them and thinking of their possibilities that I nearly ignored their original, and was called back to her time after time by the necessity to snare her strange silence and copy it on to these masks that I was making.

All the time there was ordinary conversation, but more staccato than usual. I was so glad that she was here. She was so pleased that I had asked her. What would she, or would she not, eat ? Did she like what she was eating ? Did she like the restaurant next door ? Had she been to the play I had bought tickets for ? It was the same piece I had been to the night before with Joaquina ; indeed I had come straight away from the theatre into this adventure in which I was involved. It gave me a peculiar sense of delight to see the same thing again and to go over those stages of a longing and a gradual sinking into danger. It was rehearsing for something that had already been put into achievement.

But I was living in a life quite outside these little

conventionalities of talk, and I found the small necessary questions somewhere far down in myself and fished them carelessly out of the deep waters of my consciousness, while the whole trajectory of my thoughts was so long coming out of that dark twilight into the purest and most unencumbered possibilities that her answers to my questions hardly left any mark upon me, and sometimes I was afraid of asking the same thing twice over.

She had in her more poignancy and a stronger pull upon the sense of pity than it is possible to imagine. This conscious or unconscious guile was armed with as powerful weapons of conquest. She had greater beauty than need be stipulated for any adventure and, as well, this small bird-like pathos which had so much power in its weakness and which, while I pitied, I longed one day to hurt a little and make suffer. But this was a tired refinement that could only follow on profound experience.

Miriam was her name, for we had quickly broken that part of our covenant; and she was, as I had imagined, just twenty years old—far too old for a horse or deer, but hardly enough for her strange human type, which held in it the warmth, the silence, and the fidelity of these creatures. She had also their speed and their swift change of direction once her calm had altered into mobility. In quick word and quick movement her spiritual as well as her physical tread seemed as light as the deer, who will be at the back of the glade or the far end of the field before it is possible to come near to them.

In the few hours between my first and my second visit to the theatre, I had been thrown under this violent potency and spell, so that I came back to those scenes again quite outside my former self. I had captured and had here sitting by my side just that kind of person

who was the point and focus of the play, and who had precisely the type of beauty which, apart from a little dull humour, made up its only *motif*. So I was able to parallel in the possibilities of the next few days just what I would have chosen had I the power to work my own wishes. This was an improvement beyond question upon my situation of the night before and one which I felt that nothing except the mysteries of this time of year could have brought into possibility; but it was made pathetic and robbed of its guilt by that other half of her personality which faced away from these scenes into child-like qualities that I could never have the cruelty to break and which contrasted the false innocence of the prettiness I was watching with their own genuine realization. So I was breathing a double world of artifice and of truth; I was more than ever an actor, and more than ever a part of the audience.

We went home together after the theatre. I suggested going somewhere for supper, but she said her friend was away and that she could give me something to eat in her flat. She lived in two rooms above a greengrocer's shop in a side street not very far from Selfridge's.

It was just a day since we had met by that strange chance of the party. Now the wheel of time had made one more turn, but if it had carried us forward, at any rate we were carried by it in the same direction. If it were possible I was anxious to give it some small irrevocable turn that would make it difficult for Miriam and myself to separate our fates for, at any rate, some little time—perhaps until these days of uneasiness and transition were over. But instead of this, I gave it a violent push that has sent both of us running down the slope ever since. Yet it was not my strength only

that achieved this, and to make each clause binding on us both she had to assert her will as well.

But it is little use trying to treat this situation by stages, or to break its phases into words. Instead, it is better to draw its parallel in a set of images which can build themselves up side by side with the truth and keep to the straight lines of its track, avoiding unnecessary corners and stretches of monotony.

In the meantime, if it is possible to lift up this story of the ordinary into anything that is a little better than itself, the stage properties may be transmuted and it is not imperative to insist too much upon the square, bright box in which we talked. We can let alone the wide settee, too near the ground to either sit or lie upon in any comfort; the pictureless walls; the rows of cups hung by their handles from hooks, these being, indeed, the only sign of plenty in the whole flat; we need not listen for the traffic in Oxford Street; we can ignore the glare of lights from the windows opposite; forget the four flights of dark stairs and pay no heed to the tap dripping into the sink behind the door with the insistence of a coldly deliberate clock that hurries on the hours to a faster pace than their true speed. In fact, we can become entire arbiters of speed and may tighten or extend its rate at our will.

This cold statue I began to love had now turned into the most complicated machinery gifted with everything that a carved image lacks, just as though life were grafted on to that incorruptible and changeless death.

I had first of all been hypnotized by trying to think what expression the lines of that mask led into, and I was willing to sacrifice all that its spell meant over me for the uncertainty that lay the other side of its calm.

But a whole universe of the senses was contained between these two static conditions of her mask-like immobility and the smile into which it was eventually broken. I could envy no one a knowledge of all the wisdom in the world or want to borrow for this moment any power over visible or invisible creation while I lay under her potency. Instead, there were more worlds of poetry and wider spheres of music burning into creation and as quickly fading into others in each phase of her than the life of any poet or artist lasts long enough to conquer.

This machine had its thousands of little engines drawing out all my power. She was no longer about to give me anything; she was receptive and was borrowing all my own life, which she magnified a million-fold in order to materialize her ghost into living. She drew out all my vitality, and her machinery of increase had made a spiritual entry into my own self where I could feel it working and preparing the strength without which all her efforts were in vain.

Then, this appearance of her body and limbs being some kind of an engine, this slightly spider-like depredation and danger-stirring vanished completely away from her, and her whole nature now lay before me like a bed of flowers looking up at the sun and wanting rain. They were still, absolutely still, or if they moved it was in a wind that was not of their own volition; it was something from outside arrived to them by force of circumstance, and it was no use their resisting its force.

I seemed to be blown, cloud-like, over to this world of flowers. Night and day, or moon and sun, which made me sleep or wake, plied their strength in a compelling sun and a cool and silver-sounding wind playing

out of night, whose joint force brought me nearer to this feat of creation that they had delegated to me.

But I was not ready for it yet, since it is a poor summer that is born into creation with so little trouble, and in place of the rain that these flowers expected, the rolling of drums and the clangour of thunder broke from the cloud. All my forces were imprisoned in me in martial and heroic continence, and she fled out of her flower-heads into a tower that looked brassy and forbidding against my strength.

Her limbs, the instruments of this engine, lay waiting and motionless. They were as still as the mask I had rattled a few hours ago with a chain or two of words, and their whole geometry ran into this expectancy to give it point. They were now the walls of this tower, and they would lie quiet and strong, hiding their own purposeful weakness until attacked, when they were planned at once to crumble and let out the prisoner inside, whose pleasure and very sustenance hung upon their collapse. All the inconceivable irritations out of which the attraction of beauty is made were now put into operation, and every one of them was a little life to be taken and drunk. The whole of them were fused into one possible sacrifice which was stored with every enticement of the senses.

The visual world, all the objects among which I moved, and even the oblique things that spoke to the spirit more than to the eyes, became heightened and transformed. It was an hallucination of the nerves that poets, and only poets, can know; and it was a dance of all the senses before they create something out of nothing and leave this tangible increase behind them when they fall back into the ordinary and the normal. They built themselves

up through the clouds and flowers of metaphysics into a series of transcendencies of the actual so perfect in their colouring and proportion that the martial and heroic mood coming up at their back to seize and to create cracked and broke the still and glass-like vision of these pictures and faded through them into a fiery rapture that fast died into pity and weakness.

But, first of all, it was the turn of the actual to become transcendentalized. The room became the platform belonging to this beautiful and intricate machine; it was simply the engine-room that housed and contained its strength, and it was filled for this reason with the strongest radiation of its principle. The most ordinary objects were kept down to their environment, but their volume and pitch of importance became magnified out of all precedent with their past or with what they would relapse into once this enchantment had ceased to work.

Each chair—there were about three or four of them in the room—had no longer the appearance of having been pushed back against the wall, but seemed to be alert and living; not only did it wait to be used, but it stood at so vital an angle with the other chairs that it must share with them some community of heart or nerves. It was no longer just dead wood; if it had dropped its leaves and branches it had adopted this new life instead, becoming, indeed, a kind of minor and dumb hostess, and kept alive by its interest in its owner and her friends, and in the social relations of its sister chairs. It must be treated gently and not banged down or knocked about. Exactly the same condition applied to the tea-cups; not only to those hanging from their handles by the row of hooks, but also to the used ones standing on the table. They had arranged themselves into a vital pattern of

angles towards each other, and their respectful silence among themselves was like the wordless attention of the butlers in a rich house. Even the walls of the room were not so much blank walls as discreetly restful screens pushed up by themselves to what they considered to be the most suitable propinquity to the persons in the room.

This heightening of the tempo of everything made the hour and the moment of very little importance, and it was daylight as well as night. The sun came through the windows and began building inside the room. The red bricks of the houses across the street had no longer their usual colour and consistency of mud, but were made of good, red clay, each one of the cubes filling itself out to the utmost limits of fairness, like satisfying chocolate or a full weight of something rich and sweet. A change of this same nature came over the boards of the flooring that now shone and glistened like glass, so that anything standing on them lost its separateness and became, while you looked at it, the centre of the whole room. A pair of red slippers, that should have been isolated and lost except as a hindrance and a thing to trip over, became drenched with personality and regulated the disposition of all the other objects in the room until they fell into proportion with its new assumption of importance.

The four boundaries of the walls had the power to completely alter their own scale, and if they had been a series of screens a few seconds ago, they were now absolutely arbitrary in their arrangement and had allowed the sun to erect a whole series of constructions within their territory, made of his unsubstantial golden timbers, out of light rods of shadow, and from wall spaces of vibrant and clear light. At moments, the whole affair

would vanish—this was when a cloud passed over the sun—and all the time the whole thing was slowly sliding along, not fading at all, but moving its apparatus across the blank space between this window and the next, until its beams climbed through the second window and now it built itself again, rod by rod, timber by timber, inside the room.

Miriam's white body was curved and recessed into an architecture to be attacked. In order to achieve this, she was fortified with an easy barrier of nerves, a zone of shyness ; and this had to be advanced through in order to reach to the spirit or soul beyond. This spirit or soul needed wings to lift itself out of the body, and these flights were more frequent than a purely spiritual experiment would require. It was just a wish to shake and flash her wings in that purer and less encumbered air, but in order to reach to it and to attain the speed that was essential to its success, there had always to be some small area of resistance, some little bastion to be broken through. The whole of these fortifications were now defended, and that naked and frail geometry lay still to be a victim.

Then, all those walls and battlements turned over their whole nature and became, instead, a tree bright and heavy with fruit.

These wanted just a small effort to be taken, and they hung where a simple movement could snare them. One of them, and it was impossible to tell which, held the secret and the very matter of the whole tree's life. Her body, the stem from which the branches and the leaves hung, was bigger than my two hands by themselves could hold, and as soon as my arms had also to be used, then her body itself claimed all my attention, and there

was none left over to capture the fruit above. If, though, I stretched towards them and did not hold her, it was with the greatest difficulty that they surrendered themselves to me, and by the time they were in my power, she had fled out of where my arms might have been into some deep-hidden fastness of the tree's green heart.

So I pinioned her frightened and yet willing boughs with one hand that swept their different sweetness into obedience and then the heroic continence that I had practised broke from me in iron and violent impetuosity. Hundreds of trumpets sounded in my ears, and I could have put a whole universe to the sword.

All the music and poetry of the world, but in their martial moods, poured themselves into my iron strength to help me, and then, having assumed flesh, ran out from me in every direction to do my bidding. They conquered together; and after that it was an ambrosial feast enduring into what seemed to be the heart of eternity, though, since this cannot be measured, its duration may have been of utter and most lightning-like speed as well as of eternal length. Then a lull like the gentlest and most insidious sleep came over them.

In this sudden quiet, my contentment was spoilt a little by the descent from the cruelty which had been a part of my impetus and one of the weapons of my equipment, and the other side of it as it cooled back into normality made me feel sorry for this soft and gentle thing that I had robbed, though if I asked myself what I had taken from her I found it was something of which I had given her the half while its rest had been her own emanation working upon my beginning. So it seemed to me but a fulfilment of the necessary and the obvious, with no more excuse for sentiment than that of any

condition which is about to change into another. The quality in virgin innocence, like that in virgin soil, seemed to me to lie in its angle towards improvement, and the slope is always out of the immature into the perfected.

But now she seemed sorry for what had happened, and could hardly be comforted. It appeared that this one valuable thing in her possession, the intrinsic side, as it were, to her beauty, she had parted with for no return. Her solace lay in the invisible nature of this robbery which nothing save a repetition of the same incident could reveal; and then a kind of balm flowed out of her heart with which to heal this wound, and I knew that I would never be able to leave her, and that I was tied to her for evermore by this pathetic communion. I now found in her what I had never hoped to find before, a real spiritual and emotional appeal to me over and above her loveliness to the eyes.

We were now hopelessly the captives of each other, and were tied to the two chariot-wheels of time, so that we could never escape from each other or from that insidious and quickening descent into the darkness. I was fastened to her in a contemptible way that began to excite my disgust, and I wanted to stir the dust in which I was floundering and to fight and annoy the heavy weight I had to carry. But this mood soon changed into one of a vicious and despairing pleasure in the awkwardness of my burden; and looking down on myself from outside my body I almost relished the slavery to which I was condemned.

So I turned to it and tried to hide myself in that pillar of dust. Its shape and girth were the same as that of the tree-stem I had held before in my arms, and while my arms encompassed it, the dust began to turn

golden, and its particles glistened like strands of hair or boughs of leaves. Also, it lost its brackish heat, and had the cool that a shower of rain must have when it has just left its cloud. I was altogether lost and hidden in that sudden shade, and all signs of my aggression of before left me. But, all the time it lasted, I knew the deception that had been practised upon me and had to insist with myself upon the truth of this mirage. I knew that it would surely vanish and that the dust it turned back into would be black and hopeless with no trace in it of the things that had cooled and refreshed me.

In a moment, it crumbled and fell, and even the pillar that had been the centre of this storm, and that had changed by this miracle into the stem of a lovely tree and into a silver fountain-foot, springing and leaping in my arms, now vanished. It was not hidden ; it had gone away for ever and would never come back.

A terrible sinking horror came over me. There was some appalling ghost living in that dust and clinging to me for life. Yet it was more material and less bodily a phantom than could be imagined ; for there was nothing of the spirit or soul left in it, and yet it was breathing in that darkness like a horrible octopus in some dim corner under the rocks. It drew its vitality, its life-blood, from me and it would not let me go. All my strength ran out of me into its stringy veins. Unless I could get away from it, I would be borne down to be nothing more than its blood-store, its vat of life.

But then, although its struggles continued, the force of their terror upon me began to weaken. There was something pitiful in their frenzy ; and those familiar lines of architecture, that look of an engine about its curves and corners, started to come out of the tangled

and convulsed darkness. So this had been the purpose of that machinery; and I could not forget, while I watched it lapse into stillness, the impact that had thrown it into life and the long and smooth slope down which it had to travel with gathering speed before it could begin its flight. Not only had I to impel it out of its stillness, but I moved along the track with it and was carried into the air as much by its will as by my force. The miraculous changes that it had the power to work were shared with me, and I was the accomplice in all its transmutations of the mood and spirit. All these things I owed to it, and in thinking of them I could not grudge the few moments of slackening speed, and the coming to earth again of this incredible engine of the body. It was asleep now, and I was left outside its influence.

The night was perfectly still and quiet. The lamplight never faltered and made not the slightest stir or noise. It was as dumb and impassive as before, constructing nothing and changing nothing. It was an absolute neuter between the loud day and the feline night. Its only purpose, this lit and theatrical darkness, was to hold a lamp to see by, and I much preferred the black and authentic darkness with no spy upon our secrets. These lamps were so many dumb servants set there to report upon what they saw, and I hated their acquiescence and obedience. But these witnesses were inevitable, and no bribe could lure them away.

There was a delight to be found in taunting them, and in enjoying the contrast between their alert uselessness and the utter and profound silence that lay everywhere round them. So late as this, there was no one to listen to their secrets, and the lights in the room having

been turned out, this poor parody of day came in at the windows, but could get its beams little further than the curtains. And they stood still there. They never moved or tried to build themselves into any convincing shape.

So, not being able to see with any clearness, I lit that twilight and its dark corners with my mind and peopled them with figures.

There being no restrictions, save the limits of my fancy, I was given complete freedom of creation. The room and the square, drab situation in which I found myself, was open to the four winds, and their clean speed purged the air of the dust that had lately clung there. Instead, the hillside shook down its fleeced clouds into a wood of fruit trees. These stood close together, though not near enough to mingle their boughs. This wood, and the meadows below it, were perpetually filled with fresh shapes. The shadowed branches made a theatrical difference for the figures seen below them, and the people who had breathed and been seen for a moment in that unreality lived again here and the vibrant and violent blue sky shone down through the leaves. What was forgotten kept itself in that pleasant darkness; and the remembered, that needed but a moment's span of life, burned into an incredible realism against that cloudy scenery of the blossom.

There was an idyllic and Sicilian languor in the air. A great snow mountain with dormant fire in its bowels lay so near across a gulf of blue sea that the cannonings of that Gargantuan wind of sulphur and of fire could be plainly heard across the distance sounding the note of danger and menace which must ever be there in contrast to the crystalline clearness and safe happiness of the

scene. A beach of fine sand ran round the circle of the bay and made a terrace for this naked poetry to parade its figures, who climbed out of the sea on to golden sea-soil, or left it for the fields of flowers beyond. Their limbs, with the blue water left upon them and just taken up by the sun, shined and flashed like swords, and this brilliant light of water was a new and positive race of shadows to which the ordinary dark and empty echoes were so many ghosts. These lights moved with them, so that their bodies were the answer to this scintillation. They ran and walked in a whorl of fire. These were the heroes of the poet and the models of the sculptor and painter. The groves of philosophy were some stunted olive trees near to the asphodels, for it was too early in the day and in the age to want shade. The flowers that grew near to the ground were all wild and were quickly bruised by the feet, though this left little mark upon their profusion and nothing broke out of the coloured ground except one or two boulders which had their answer and parallel in the rocks rising out of the painted sea.

Both the boulders and the little rocky islands were platforms on to which any of these figures climbed to rest, or to be posed in the amber that the air formed round them. Fierce points of the cactus sprang up in their violence too near to them, and were the rods and arrows to these games of war. The rocks in the sea and out of the flowers were crowded with statues that stood or lay in all the beauty that the engine of the body can achieve. Since they narrowed down their maturity to the early age when it is rare to excel in anything except in games of speed and in poetry, nothing pleased them save the stern and heroic flesh which, until it was old

enough to become a warrior and take the lives of others, was their vehicle of pleasure and their whole inspiration.

Almond trees, too low to need a ladder, stood on the hillside like so many clouds. They grew in two kinds —the pink and the white—and the first sort held the sunlight while the second seemed charged with snow. They were so small and powerless as to be easily mastered by the body, and these figures leaned against them and made their rest into a danger for the blossom. The cactus broke up the stony soil and made its points into so many spikes to tear the limbs, for no protection was worn except where one or two of the figures had a helmet on their heads. These were brightly burnished and had a horse's tail trailing down the back on to the shoulders, which formed all their theatrical property and made their trappings of poetry, symbolizing triumph and its tragic consequences.

A little further away, Joaquina, whom I had not thought of for so long, showed in her tidy and gleaming casque of hair among the leaves. I was able now, in this convincing nearness, to see that her eyes, which I had remembered as being blue without close thought, were really of a kind of burnt or tawny yellow, which turned her whole being out of a bleached paleness into a burned and gypsy fairness, and made her appeal to the senses with a much fiercer intoxication. Yet she was cold, cold, bone cold in her husk of golden armour, and I knew that though I might never stop seeing her, I could not reach to her true feeling or find out if she was anything more than an empty shell. Often I thought there was not even a ghost living under that lovely surface. But whenever she was in my mind, even in the radiance of warmth given out by Miriam, who made

a kind of daylight of the eyes and senses with the running lines and gentle curves of her whole body, Joaquina's cold and formal architecture moved into an incredible and wonderful life by the same sort of miracle that a beautiful and intelligent animal might become suddenly gifted with speech. In fact, she was nearer to that naked figure that I had seen shaking the almond tree with sunlit and flashing limbs.

Even as I thought this, that shape climbed out of the flat sea and crossed the shore, avoiding the armed cactus points. It came towards one of the almond trees while Joaquina stood by the other, and made a contrast of its warm flesh with her cold and marble restraint. Each time it moved was a sip of honey in the air ; but now the statue at its side came to life and her dark fairness snared all that sweetness from the winds. But there she stayed, taking and asking for everything and giving nothing ; and I turned away from her, knowing this was all her life, into the quick and lively machinery of my third phantom. She blew into reality with a sudden and aching pleasure, while the two forsaken ghosts faded into the dark ends of the room.

VII

EPILOGUE

THIS is as far as I have got with it, and in a short two weeks there is no time to write more than this. These are the present fictions accompanying a created past. We may think of time, for our purposes, as a long measuring line. Every hill or valley can be reduced into some sort of harmony with this set proportion, but this does not prove that these heights and depths have not their own scale of comparisons. Where we actually lift up the measure with our hands, a kind of fictitious posture or emplacement is achieved by which the real relation to what is known and determined, or proved and historical, is most difficult to describe. But my eyes and my hand, as on the first page of this book, are now directly concerned; they are grasping, or even bound by, this line of distance that is now so near and obvious; indeed, the letters flowing out from the point of my pen become the rate of speed and distance that we are travelling. So everything for a few moments is tied down on to these pages, until time springs back or forwards in obedience to my wishes.

This is the best that I have been able to do with two hot and empty weeks, and their tenuous structure has been developed and ornamented into the fullest blossoming that it can stand. The sad ruins we live among I

have hung with this trailing mantle of flowers, and the cold stones and sharp edges are somewhat cloaked and softened by this covering. Behind this fortnight, and on the other side of its lived or merely written adventure, I can see a few mornings of September mist. Its last moments move like smoke among the crockets and buttresses, and I remember the promise that my name would be invoked as they sat sketching those cracked moulds and broken metaphors of beauty. But it is not time yet to recall them with their relics, though their true return from that land of cream and cider is due for tomorrow. There are still a few hours before me.

My two friends would seem to have been concerned only with the deadness of that past and not with its life. I accused the present of being as dull because so little effort is made to palliate its uniformity, and now I have taken up the challenge that I threw down. There were the alternative treatments of broad humour, or of a sharp and photographic realism, but in their place I have tried to advance along a series of metaphorical parallels, hovering over and keeping pace with the truth. This has been the only method that gives enough play to the sort of abilities that are mine. Anecdotal and fictional writing should not be expected of a poet ; while, at the same time, there are certain heights of emotion, and certain degrees of interpretation where I hold the mastery and am seldom approached. This book has been designed for their display.

There can be few others of my generation who have spent five or six months of every year, as I have done, writing poems all through the day. Indeed, I could write a most novel and revealing book of memories about these periods of my life, for where the lives of painters,

of musicians, or of novelists, are on such full record, the mysterious art of poetry, self-taught and almost too subtle in inspiration and in texture for its origins to be understood, has never been chronicled in its strange and tumultuous procedure. But two things about it may be stressed in order to help my present purposes: first, that this incessant practice brings out, as in pianists of first-rate talent, a remarkable level of virtuosity, the benefits of which a poet should be able to convey without much difficulty into his writing of prose; secondly, that a succession of many weeks spent in this way is equivalent to supporting life on a diet of cream, and of things as strong and yet immaterial as triply-distilled essences. In fact, such a life as this is dangerous for the nerves and for the senses, and the writer has not yet been born who could support it for more than a handful of months on end. He is forced to turn, because of this, into some other direction, if half of his working life is not to be wasted and useless.

But the choice of these new directions is one of immense difficulty. It is no use, with this new and powerful battery of instruments at his command, to start along the sort of path where such strange advantages are of no avail. And having renounced the novel, because there is no room, and because half the possible material is not allowed and would draw down a too deadly persecution on its embodier, we arrive at what is termed "fine writing," only to find that this has been wrecked and twisted aside by the morality, the aestheticism, or the naughtiness,* of last century's apostles. So some new treatment has to be attempted, and, since it is difficult to avoid the achievements of Italy, at any rate her

* Ruskin, Pater, Wilde.

triumphs must be celebrated away from Tuscany or Rome.

I found for myself, as I remarked in a dialogue at an earlier part of this book, a mass of material in Naples and Sicily, and I treated this as a composer would treat a whole universe of folk-songs of which he came suddenly into possession. Their merits were re-set and they were given a symphonic treatment. It was an age of bustling and crowded cities, far removed from the new churches and idyllic meadows of the early Renaissance.

Music had been born and airs were sung at the street corner. A fine and scenic architecture gave play to all the proud and rapid emotions of its patrons; church roofs were recessed and fretted so as to receive the roulades and cadenzas of the choir; monasteries and convents took to themselves majolica cloisters and fine pharmacies to sell their fashionable distillations; the palaces of princes had a pantomime grandeur about their twisted and double staircases and the huge saloons were multiplied into infinity by mirrors. A great school of fresco painters was ready to prolong the realities of wall and ceiling into a false world of perspective; even the foulest slums were never far removed from these evidences of a wealth which the taste and habit of that day always shared to this extent with its poor neighbours; the houses where travellers lodged had their drab doorways brightened by the spangled comedians coming back to their rooms, or going out to the cheerful trestles in the hot square; and there was not a single street down whose vista you could not see the heads and banners of a passing procession.

There is a tropical depth and brilliance of colour about these scenes which lends itself quickly to treatment

by these powers and this technique, which one art, that of poetry, has developed, and which, as I have described, must often find themselves out of necessity in unemployment, and so are converted into the instruments of another medium in the intervals between their proper and authentic use. These same qualities, when applied to a strictly contemporary focus, must penetrate deep below the surface into the heart and nerve and mind before their product justifies this effort ; and to satisfy its requirements, either persons of a formidable sensitiveness must be chosen, or else the dark and hidden corners of the spirit have to be investigated and dragged into light. A number of barriers have to be pushed back and built up again on the further side of this possible extension until some new energy makes another recession and these curiosities of the soul can be followed a little nearer to their place of birth. So a complete technical perfection is impossible of achievement, and this is the poet's one superiority over the executive musician whose twelve hours of daily practice may ensure an impeccable finish and a lion-like battery of martial violence, though these mutations of the lion and dove are at the dictation of another and the half-safety felt in this reliance and lack of responsibility cannot atone for some amount of chagrin at being the vehicle and not the real instrument of creation.

But I must not let time stray away from the table where I write. It should cling to the point of my pen and follow it in tacit obedience as a shadow-dancer on a darkened stage whose lighted wand follows and outlines all his hidden movements. It has a span of a day in front of it before those two figures come back, who, since they have been created out of nothing, are no

further away than the shadowed corners of the room, are, in fact, here all the time and have never been away at all.

As I think of their curious situation, so remote and yet so immediate, I am reminded of the hotel where I stayed a night this year at Casablanca, a horrible modern town, all suburb and no centre, which has been the gift of Europe to Morocco in exchange for that country's incredible legacy of careless beauty and careless cruelty, now ensured to her, in return for this, some degree of conservation by what would seem to be a set of Museum regulations which make every Moroccan more than ever anxious to save up his pence for a visit to Casablanca, where he thinks all the arts and inventions of the West must flourish.

The porters on the jetty have the look of corsairs, and the hybrid population has produced a horde of monkey-like children who sleep all night under the tin tables of the cafés and who will fight over a thrown penny with dreadful, animal ferocity. There are two or three hotels, at one of which, resonant with its noisy band, I found myself waiting through the night, for sleep was quite impossible. A number of its tunes remained behind long after their bray had died down, and they haunted and preyed upon the mind. Some of them I remembered as once being new and fashionable, and now they had got as far away as this, just as though they had been so many demi-mondaines once known and recognized in happier surroundings and found now in these cheap cafés, because this was a garrison-town and, at any rate, the officers have a regularly paid salary. Others of the tunes had the air of never having been better than this, as if written especially for such emotions against a cheap background. This set me thinking of the newest popular tunes I had heard before leaving London, and I wondered

how long they would take in reaching Casablanca. It might be many months, perhaps a couple of years, and I could see myself in two years' time here in these same surroundings and present at the dawning of those once familiar characters; but then it occurred to me that with a wireless installation perhaps this particular tune I was thinking of could now be heard played in London, and in my mind I kept on putting this miracle into practice and turning on this new tune in the intervals and even in the midst of the loud and confident band from below, mingling in this manner the several generations of these cheap-toned and prettily-finished personalities.

This is not for the first time in this book that I have said that two years is the least time it can take to write any considerable work, and I hope that this illustration of the births and deaths, the subtle changes, and all the intermingling curves without which this span of time cannot flow past will stress and emphasize why I have thought it better to contrast the particular past that I had chosen to work and delve in with some scenes taken from the present. My aim is in this way to alternate and enrich the main subject so that there should be as many sculptures on the pedestal built up to carry this fine and antique statue. Its knightly armour towers above these contemporary scenes and does not suffer from what is carved below, where a few incidents, based on the artist's life, signal his own wish to be remembered and show him in the costume of his time surrounded by the symbols of his life and thought. But when it came to choosing these I spurned both the exact camera and the wilful eyes of the naïf, preferring, instead, to be seen where my particular skill has the advantage.

The ruins of our sad times are seen here gilded with their own setting sun, and some of the emphatic shades of the dark night that lies ahead are already to be seen threatening the horizon with the coming changes in all conceived values; with money counting for more, and therefore for less, than it ever did before; with an infinite multiplication of both pleasures and pains for the nerves; with every art tallied and knocked out by its mechanical equivalent, beginning, already, with photograph for picture, and gramophone, or cinema, for all situations, spoken, played, or sung; and with poetry perhaps extinguished altogether since it is the art of the amateur and a massacre of these drones would seem to be one of the certainties of the future.

Out of this twilight I have tried to collect some of the sparks and flashes by which it is lit. It seems that these are no more substantial than idle thoughts changing to the pace of the blind as it taps against the window; than gusts of music blown out as the swing-doors open and are sucked back again by the draught; than the changes that a mask-like face can work; or than another mask, its opposite in all things but impassivity and troubled depths of shallowness, that seems in all its marble calm and the happy colour of its gilded hair and sunburnt eyes, where everything except these two fires is pale and cold, to both ask and never answer. The movements and reactions of a piece of sensitive metal between these two magnetic stones gives us the action and all the incident of the piece; or it is a ship tossed between two rocky shores; or the choice, expressed before now in poetry, between two trees of fruit, hung with different kinds of apple, plum, or pear, or resolved by the earlier year into two towers of blossom, as almond, pink or white,

whose lovely differences divide all beauty into two halves, as in the choosing between a milky skin and raven hair or a sunburnt and gypsy fairness, tawny as to its yellow and lion-like eyes.

These are the two alternatives to the soul, and here they are to be seen plumed and metaphored to the best of my ability, for I have no wish to be a Hamlet in modern clothes. Above me, guarding, as it were, the ramparts, but in reality confined to the small space of his pedestal, so that his home is no bigger in area than that of a Stylite, stands this iron and emphatic shade in his knightly armour. His beaked shadow moves with the hours round its pedestal as a menacing hand upon a clock, sometimes dwarfed by his own self so that he cannot reach even to the rim where the tents of time are written and that old wanderer is hidden for a moment among dark walls, and, at other angles of the sun, stretched and swollen to gigantic stature so that he threatens far-off things and holds some dominion over the future, outside and beyond his ruled and dead path.

None of the Caesars is near, for they passed by and were quickly gone out of the North. This, then, is the first statue in these parts, and it is significant that his place is on a tomb, or high on the ridges of some Gothick church, for the Caesars feared their soldiers and were elected by the mob. Their images are found, therefore, either upon some arch of military triumph, as if carried in acclamation on the shoulders of the legionaries, or else in public in the market-place, close to where farmer and peasant bargained and as though appearing to them and soliciting their votes. Nor did the Caesars seek in their appearance to make much difference between themselves and their subjects; they were typical merchants

or typical centurions fattened by a special diet into some slight travesty upon those qualities of ordinary soldier or everyday citizen. If gods, they were gods by election and not by inheritance. So unique, though, was their situation that there was no foreign equivalent to their grandeur and no one of a like rank for the daughter of a Caesar to marry. It was difficult, therefore, for a line of Caesars to be aristocratic except on its paternal side, and at this stage it is not necessary to emphasize the very different ideals and inheritance of the North.

If we try to search out the secret of that dead age we find that dissimilarity, lack of sameness, was the main ingredient of its beauty. No two suits of clothes were alike, for the art of copying was not understood, and in order to balance any design or ornament a natural fertility of invention preferred the making of a fresh equivalent. Now the growth of this sameness and uniformity is our greatest present danger. It has come out of America and is but the latest of the ills, venereal disease may have been the first, which that hostile and alien soil has sent forth from itself, perhaps in revenge, to ruin Europe. I have tried to suggest in an earlier part of this book that the haunting and sinister types to be seen by lamplight, for they are only travestied by night, in the great German cities may be a definite effort on the part of mankind to counter the levelling effects of shop and factory and to work some hideous variety and ornament on to that uniform surface. Nature, which has the common sense to intervene in the birth-rate after a great war in order to balance the ratio of male and female, has surely the resource to counter even by these extreme means a more lasting and insidious danger to mankind.

Religion is fast going. Priests are seen to have no

more efficacy than witch-doctors. Church services are no more useful than the hire of wizards to bring down rain. The very survival of religion is an anomaly, as though doctors, or lawyers, had formed themselves into a corporation hedged round by magical rites. Have not doctors, or lawyers, as much right and reason ? Why should not they, instead of the priests, preside over marriage, birth, and death ?

The hereditary principle is gone. Fathers are told they have no right to save up riches for their sons. No architecture is to be seen. Football-grounds and cinemas give the only opportunity, and this is never offered, for there is no one to accept it. There is nothing left at all with clothes. The dress of men has been abandoned and left unchanged for two generations, while women are nearly arrived at the same stage. Their cropped hair may mark the last fashion before a permanent uniform is evolved. Already actress, prostitute, and fashionable beauty are impossible to distinguish between.

Murder, and to a now curtailed extent the divorce-court, have been thrown open to the public as permanent serials run gallantly by the competing newspapers. Practically the only time in which the great public comes into anything that can be called contact with the arts is in the dance-hall, or from their own gramophone. There are some qualities to this kind of music which no one could deny, though any excellence is outnumbered by ten times its amount of sentiment and vulgarity. The hysteria attendant upon daily results and daily news leaves no time for anything but this.

In order to foster these very results of wage-earning the United States have introduced prohibition to increase the efficiency of the worker. It is to be hoped that the

workers of Europe will prefer to keep their efficiency undeveloped by this means, and that the odious effects and arid deserts of ugliness which America produces and stands for will soon produce a definite desire on the part of European countries to develop their own means of defence against these invasions of stupidity and barrenness. Both Russia and America should be hateful to our eyes, for they spell death to all our achievement, past and future. But of these two the most dangerous is America.

No sooner did the nations of the East come into contact with Europe than they fell to dust and ashes. Their art, their power, and all their institutions crumbled and fell from them. As regards things of the mind or spirit America has no greater strength against us; they are stilled and paralysed by our history, held so fast in their wonder that the act of creation is beyond their strength.

It should be easy to take advantage of this hiatus. But, unfortunately, the cult of the primitive, silliest of all artistic affectations, has made the painter lose all his inherited fluency and caused his position to be invaded owing to its obvious simplicity by the hordes of amateurs who since the artists have renounced their skill find this an easy victory, and, in fact, often make, judged by this criterion, better painters than do the professionals themselves. It is essential to regain this lost fluency; to throw off, for they would drop easily, the parasites who cling to this dying body; and to connect ourselves with the chain of tradition that has been wilfully broken and cast aside. As far as painter, poet, or musician, is concerned the Church may be mourned as a patron, if its creed is disbelieved; and, so long as rich men spend their money in the right way, it matters little if their

wealth had its sources in a Norman charter or a soap-factory.

In order to start this mood of creation again a kind of trance has to be induced. Any artist who has gone through a period of unproductiveness can testify to the truth of this. In such a situation it is no use thinking too much, the results of which are only so many laboured and abortive experiments. Instead, it is essential to let the senses lull themselves into a trance till this gradually works into the intoxication that brings confidence and is the indispensable accompaniment to work. Therefore, in so much as any small individual effort can help to bring about this state, the poet, or the musician, has now an unrivalled opportunity and his career has never been more needed. Unfortunately, it would seem as if the members of these two professions were born in an inverse ratio to the general increase of population, so that, until some radical change takes place, their number, few already, will be diminished. Then, we shall be as extinct and pathetic as the brother and sister whom I have chosen as being typical of a dead and useless attitude towards the past.

There is, though, an equal probability that, with music at any rate, the very opposite of this may be true. Music, compared with poetry, is a newer and immensely reinforced means directed towards the same end. Its deeper intellectual scope and greater excitant properties are too obvious to need emphasis. There can never be another age when poetry is the aim of life and poets are heroes, though there have been many such in the past, in Japan a thousand years ago, in Persia of the fifteenth century, and during the reigns of the Valois kings. But music, and many kinds of sports, will be the recreation of the

future, and, indeed, its successes have hardly begun, and it will conquer where poetry has tried and failed, and when the great powers that once lay in a poet's hand have been forgotten and relinquished.

In order to restore things to the normal after the hundred years' smoke of the first industrial age a greater effort must be made to beautify life than has ever been made before ; and the naïf and the wilful primitive must be kept out of the way, for their only achievement is to impede and obstruct. The eclectic, also, must disappear, as must those associations of intelligence with tiresome affectations of the voice and manner that are only to be met with in England, and that never appeared, even here, before the time of the Pre-Raphaelites. In fact, these are the legacy of that now despised brotherhood, and persons catching this infection may be said to antedate their intelligence by nearly a century.

Such are these sad ruins. They have no chance of being rebuilt, but it is just possible that fine and new structures may rise up beside them. There are voices speaking under the low arches.

They sound hidden and muted by some cold corner of stone, being no more seen and recognized than are the tramps under a railway-arch on a wet and windy night. Such are the signals for a quiet and hurried passing-by, for it might be dangerous to disturb them as they dry their clothes and warm their hands at the fire ; and, in the same way, we must not stay too long beneath the roofless walls.

Just at this present the scene has only its own imminent future and its own immediate past. This confines itself to the actual, or possible, background for its characters. The drawing-master and his sister, being the first artists

I ever met, form its outermost boundaries, for it is no use moving them further away than the limits of our own lives, and I only wish to think of them in situations where the missing of a train or a breakdown of the motor-car could have prevented this fulfilment.

The sounds and tones of but a few days back are still ringing in my ears, and if I held a shell to them the empty volutes would reply to me, not with the punctual and breaking tides, but in the speech of cheap and slangy sentiments, as of that music issuing from the swing-doors I have been constrained to open more than once before.

Unfortunately, there is one concept, one conceived idea, that has attached itself to the two figures seen against that floral scenery, and this has its weaknesses which are difficult to explain. They can only be illustrated in this manner. There can be no one who has not at moments in his life wondered how much to the safe side of the line of sanity he was situated. The symptoms and peculiarities that mark the crossing of that frontier must be gradually approached and imperceptibly crossed, until things which seemed forced and fanciful become natural and unnecessary of explanation to the person concerned. Once this stage has been reached nothing is any longer odd or unconvincing; indeed, life must be more sensible and logical than to the normal senses. In the same way, the stores of simile and metaphor which are thrown open to the poet are never seen by him to be a part of life's principles in urging him towards the objects that his heart or mind admires, but they seem really to emanate from the person or thing itself, and not to have been placed there solely by the eyes that behold them. That is to say, the credit of these discoveries belongs to the writer and not to the person out of whom they seem to emanate.

VIII

LIFE IN THE DEAD STREET

S. S.: Oh! Come in!

C. C.: I'm disturbing you.

S. S.: Good heavens, no! Thank goodness you're back, or I should never have stopped writing. I finished the task you set me two days ago, but have gone on, nevertheless, all yesterday and to-day.

C. C.: Well, stop it, for the moment, and come round and talk to us. Hilda has got our sketches out for you to see, and there's a bottle of Benedictine we've smuggled home from Fécamp. Of course, it's the same as you buy at the "Six Bells," but somehow it tastes different.

S. S.: I've always admired that bit of Shakespeare's England, but d'you know I've only once been in a public-house.

C. C.: When was that?

S. S.: I was taken to the "Blue Posts," behind the Café Royal, to see the fat landlord and his collection of pictures and photographs of fat people. I went with the "Icelander" and with Guevara, you'll know who I mean!

C. C.: I know. He did your sister's portrait in the Tate.

S. S.: Do you like it?

C. C.: It's magnificent colour. You'd guess it was

by a Spaniard. It's a good likeness, too, I should say; is it like her poems ?

S. S.: Isn't that rather a leading question ?

C. C.: Well, all those bright colours, and that shimmering, dazzling effect ?

S. S.: I wish you could see her picture by Tchelitchew, a Russian painter. It's painted entirely in dust and ashes and is more melancholy, more sunk, so to speak, into its own personality than any portrait I can think of. It's just as much like her as Guevara's picture. In fact, more so. But isn't this your door ?

C. C.: No, the next. This is it. Here we are. Hilda !

H. C.: Is it Mr. Sitwell ? So our fortnight's tryst is kept to the day.

S. S.: And almost to the moment. We suggested ten o'clock. How faithful we've been !

H. C.: Carl has told you about this Benedictine ? Some coffee, too ?

S. S.: Thanks. Oh ! I like that. Isn't it the chapel at Amboise where Leonardo is buried ? The chapel of St. Hubert with gilded antlers on its spire ? And you've arranged Carl's on the other side of the room, have you ? When we've finished our Benedictine we'll walk round and hold a regular exhibition.

C. C.: We've done five or six dozen sketches, each. May I ask how many pages you've written ?

S. S.: Forty to fifty of the actual story, as arranged between ourselves, and another twenty, or so, in the last two days waiting for you to come back. Sixty to seventy in all. In fact, about a page to each sketch of yours, but of course you outnumber me, two to one.

H. C.: You'll read it aloud to us, won't you ?

S. S.: I'll leave it here for you to read, if I even do that. You're both inside the frame, and I can hardly let you out without spoiling the picture.

H. C.: Will we recognize ourselves ?

S. S.: You were in it long before Carl came up and spoke to me in the café at Blois. Then, I was travelling round collecting material. I've got it all now, all I want, and have reached the stage of putting it into its final form. This book has not much more than a hundred pages to run. Three-quarters of it is finished and done with. I hope you'll like the love-scene. It puts some of these novelists in their places.

Your figures have leaned out of it at times, like the things a painter brushes into his fresco to give it realism. The plaster has been simulated into a boulder jutting out, or the corner of a cloud trails down from the ceiling on to the wall and has become concrete and anchored, as it were, into one dimension more than its own strict flatness of coloured plaster. Or, to repeat a simile I was thinking of a few hours ago, your personalities are part of the sculptures I have designed for the pedestal. A few incidents, based on my own life, show me in the costume of my time, surrounded by the symbols of my life and thought. They alternate and enrich my main subject, and are so many decorations below the plinth of the heroic, iron statue I am setting up.

H. C.: You say it is three-quarters finished.

S. S.: Well, for the moment, we're only concerned with the part of it that you and Carl directly suggested to me, aren't we ?

C. C.: Exactly, and what have you tried to do in that ?

S. S.: I have applied my method to a transcendentalized account of the fortnight since we last met. The ordinary things of life, if I've been successful, have been transmuted and lifted out of their focus into some more permanent level of experience where they are not incongruous with the rest of my matter. This has been a direct frontal attack, such as no poet has delivered for some stretch of time. But, if my medium can combine this wretched present that we live in—when else should we have liked to live?—with the riches of its past, in the tattered old clothes that those ghosts are reduced to wearing, then my project will have been realized and my poetics can be excused by their results.

C. C.: In fact, it comes to this. Besides showing yourself choosing out a subject to write upon from those that suggested themselves to you, you have given a picture of yourself in the process of collecting material for your book; now, you are dealing with things that actually happened in your mind or were typical of it while engaged in this process of composition; lastly, at the end of the lens, so to speak, the subject itself appears, set up and fully coloured by your vision and experience. That is how I understand you. Am I right?

S. S.: So correct that it sounds suspiciously like my own voice speaking through your lips. But I'm hoarse; give me some lemonade, or a little more of that Benedictine!

H. C.: In fact, it is a portrait of yourself at work.

S. S.: I've had two things in mind as models. One of them is the self-portrait of Vermeer in the Czernin collection in Vienna. But realism has not been my aim, and where, as in this second picture, part of my subject has been a study of the light coming through a window

and the blind tapping and beating in the afternoon wind, it has been the effect of these things upon the mind that has interested me, and not the exact patterns thrown by the reflections on to the silk and velvet of my clothes as I sit thinking. That, and the tweed or serge of my suit, have made the difference. But, even in a silk doublet with slit sleeves, I should not have dwelt for long upon that even surface, for having chosen a noisy and pugnacious age to study I need to be set round with trophies of lance and trumpet.

C. C.: That reminds me. I must say, this time, I was very disappointed with the tombs. There's nothing I enjoy drawing so much, but I suppose it's the Revolution, we hardly found a single one worth sketching. Hilda thought the same as me.

S. S.: In fact, you didn't enjoy yourselves as much as on our trip to Naples ?

H. C.: I'm afraid that started us with new notions of the picturesque. I'm a little tired, now, of frosty mornings and green grass afternoons. Carl can't forget that view.

C. C.: You're quite right, Hilda. I've lived in another dimension ever since I saw that incredible perspective. I don't think we shall go again to Normandy. It gives me a pain in my heart. The buildings are sad and aloof, and have the sort of helpless regret that an old ballad or song gives to one.

S. S.: At last you've seen how useless they are! An entirely new standard, a fresh criterion as it were, has got to be set up, somehow. And yet it is no use living in the present without any tradition at all. The past has got to be made use of. But, to begin with, a new set of enemies must be declared. You know what

I'm going to say! The novelist, the business man, the art-dealer. But I mustn't say any more. After all, they won't last for ever. What are business-men but money-beetles, rolling the little balls of mud and manure that they've collected in front of them! As for the dealers, let's try to extol every single thing that's no use to them!

C. C.: I must say, there's not exactly a rush for my sketches. One summer they let me hang some dozens of my things in the hotel at Dinan. By the end of the season only two of them had sold. Nobody under fifty would look at them. Never mind! How do you like this one? It's a street of old houses at Valognes in the Contentin. D'you know the place?

S. S.: Yes, I've been there.

C. C.: I sat the whole morning, sketching. Not a child came to disturb me, and Hilda will bear me out that the whole three hours I was drawing not more than a half-dozen people, old women at that, passed me in the street.

S. S.: I can well believe it. I know Valognes, and it's as dead as any town I've ever seen. It's so rare to meet a human being abroad in the streets that the houses lose all their scale. After looking at them for any length of time, as you had to do to draw them, their reality must seem to leave them.

The top of Carl's sketching board, as he drew at his easel, was as high as the roof of the next house. So he must be as tall as that.

The street died away in flat perspective like a theatre scene built up in stone, and the houses were all of the early seventeenth century. They were as clean as at

Bruges or Haarlem, and had no more of the Renaissance than satyr's head, or mildly conceived cornucopia, could give them. They had high gables, and the window in each gable was like the front of a cabinet.

It was an autumn day with a great deal of its sunlight still to burn. All the peacefulness of that particular life came back to the dead street. The window-sills were bright with flowers. Smoke climbed straight from the chimney into the bare heaven, and the tiles glistened as though a golden brush had been passed over them. It was a paradise for Carl and Hilda—or had been, till it crumbled and was too dead to hold them.

All the afternoon nothing happened. Flowers breathed into the open doorways, and leaves of shade flickered against the walls. Sometimes a great bee, like a golden ball, knocked upon the window-pane but was beaten back by the glass. Nothing happened, and apparently nothing ever would happen.

The evening had a faded freshness while you breathed it, as though seasoned with quince and clove. Nothing had happened, and morning came again.

It was the time of Henri Quartre, who used to dance under the oak-trees with the pretty peasant girls, and this was the last age that interested my two artists. Its tunes were happy and untroubled. The houses were well-stocked with food, the orchards deep in fruit, and a sunset breeze moved the boughs to the measure of the farandole. The past was sweet and scented.

It broke in a little foam of spires and bells at their feet.

These were all the things they had loved. But the middle-ages, whose very name implies their supposed fixed point in time and the apparent summit of history

so wildly ridden by the poets and artists of the Romantic Age, were now drifting, slowly and deliberately, into the distance. They were as dead as a broken machine, the wheels of which you can still turn with your hand but which will never move by its own power again.

These are the authentic sad ruins. And they are turned more melancholy still by any ghosts that try to shelter in them and are left outside the roofless walls. Such were Carl and Hilda.

But the airs that had echoed so lately with the farandole now resounded with an alert and live music that carried nothing except its own direct messages. It had no associations save these, being sprung only from garish scenery and from the cheaper kind of prettiness that looks best against painted roses. This it had done because all the arts had failed, and because there was a hopeless bankruptcy in everything else except this unaffected need to please the eyes with pretty limbs and soft faces.

The winds rolled like drums announcing something special, and Claude and Cordelia walked past. It was their holiday, and they had come to the country.

Seeing the English brother and sister from their hotel, Claude took out a far too golden cigarette-case and began smoking. He looked half matador, half hairdresser, and Cordelia was in her usual long clothes and wide hat. The two brothers and two sisters would meet in an instant. Carl and Hilda had been much puzzled by them. Claude and Cordelia had guessed them at once. But they were beginning to like just what Carl and Hilda had started to despise.

This is the sadness of life, that no knowledge can be inherited, and that everything has to be started from the beginning with each new comer. The dead street with

its two façades propped up, and with nothing behind them, was no gayer from these lessons that have to be learnt over again.

Behind them, the street jostled and swayed with a crowd of masks. The satanic Algerian; the small dark woman with her hair brushed straight and a man's collar and tie; her wigged friend, bleached from natural darkness into that Scandinavian pallor as of painted wax; the pair of brothers—or were they sisters?—with their odd smile as of a simple secret, dear to them both and holding their means of livelihood; all these had come here for their holiday, for a trial of bucolics.

They advanced with their characteristic walks, recognizing old tunes and dragging them out of the sunlight, as though pulling fruit from boughs. The horrible, haunted future lay just in front, and soon their shadows would mark it. The kings of old tragedy lay in the dust they kicked.

This was the flood of ghosts I let loose to people the waste spaces and fill the emptiness of those two sketch-books. They came to complete these pages of an interlude between two serious acts, allowing time for my more heavy machinery to be moved. Yet their obvious importance to the whole scheme excuses this interference.

They typify some kind of life against so many dead admirations. They could have no better scene, and this street of old houses can never have held a more spirited foil, for it brought out every quality that had lain dead there.

We may imagine both scene and characters as enjoying themselves to the same high degree; and, watching them, I had no time to think of my own degrees of sadness, and of the figures I should have liked to bring on to complete, or contradict, this faded town and the sketch-books that tried to chronicle its dead merit.

NOTES

1. I am bound to admit that this denial of mine was reversed and put to nought the first time I set foot in another continent but Europe. So far my experience has been limited to Morocco ; but, even in this small scope, there is enough to disprove my contention. This is not Asia, but North Africa, never famous for the arts, and lying on the uttermost limits of the Moslem world. The grand mosque of Tlemcen with its openwork cupola, its mihrab, and its court paved with slabs of onyx ; the smaller mosque of Sidi el Haloui ; the ruined minaret of Mansoura ; the mosque of Sidi Bou Medine, lying like a little Umbrian village upon the hills above Tlemcen, with its bronze doors and the gilded honeycomb of the porch above it ; the Kairouiine mosque at Fez, and the Medersa Attarine ; the Kasba at Rabat, the broken minaret of Hassan, the ruins of Chella ; the Koutoubia tower and the tombs of the Saadian Sultans at Marrakech ; these were the revelations of an unknown land, nearly omitted from every history of the arts, and only treated as the poor refuge of the Andalucian Moors. Of all the buildings named, those at Rabat and at Mansoura, and the Koutoubia tower, are twelfth-century work belonging to the age of the Gothick cathedrals, while the rest are affairs of the fourteenth century, forming a parallel to the lighter, filigree Gothick of that date. After these, what can be the buildings of Koniah and of Brusa, of Persia and of India ? But I still hold to the truth of my footnote on page 16.

2. A few details may be of interest as to the castles of Syria and the Holy Land. The Castle of Belfort, called Kal'ateshShakîf by the Arabs, lies about 2,500 feet above the sea and commands the pass from Sidon to Damascus. It is first

mentioned in 1179, but had surrendered to Saladin by 1196. In 1240 the castle, together with the town of Sidon, was bought by the Templars, but it was taken from them in 1280, and has been deserted ever since. It is protected by a moat hewn in the rock to a depth of from fifty to one hundred and twenty feet. On the south side, only, it is connected with a narrow mountain-ridge. The walls slope outward to a distance of twenty to thirty feet.

Blanchgarde, or Specula Alba, named from its conspicuous white chalk rocks, and called by the Arabs Tell es-Sâfiyeh, was made into a castle by King Fulke of Anjou in 1138. In 1190 the castle was taken and destroyed by Saladin. It lies between Gaza and Jerusalem in a great river valley filled with mimosa bushes.

The fortress of Toron, between Safed and Tyre, was built in 1107 by Hugh de St. Omer, Lord of Tiberias, for the purpose of making forays into his country of Tyre. The Saracens captured it, and it was besieged without success by the Christians in 1197-1198. Scandalion, or Iskandarûneh, was fortified by Baldwin I, in 1116, to help him in his attack upon Tyre. In spite of its name the site has nothing to do with Alexander the Great, but was so called from being situated on a Roman road built during the reign of Alexander Severus.

The last, and greatest of these fortresses, Kerak, lies on the far side of the Dead Sea, upon the road to Petra. It commanded the caravan-route from Egypt and Arabia to Syria. The castle was held by Rainald de Châtillon against Saladin from 1183 to 1188, but was at last captured by him, together with the castle of Shôbek, or Mons Regalis, built by Baldwin I. Kerak is one of the finest mediaeval castles in existence, with huge bastions, great galleries, corridors and water-cisterns. The military architecture of the Middle Ages is nowhere seen to better advantage than here, in a waste land removed thousands of miles from Coucy, Pierrefonds, or the Welsh castles of Edward I. It is at the moment undergoing expert restoration.

3. The pair of pictures referred to are by Fedele Fischetti, and were painted in 1808, the year of Joachim Murat's expedition

to Capri. The first of them shows the force embarking at the Punto della Campanella under the supervision of King Gioacchino. His flag is flying above the Royal villa, and among the officers of his staff is Colletta, the famous historian of Naples. The second picture shows the actual taking of Capri. Sir Hudson Lowe, the future gaoler of Napoleon at St. Helena, was the English Commandant of the Island. The youth in a high shako and salmon-pink trousers is Achille Murat; but on grounds of accuracy it is better to admit that his alternative appearance, in no clothes at all, takes place on a painted ceiling at Caserta, where he rides with his father in a chariot after the classical fashion. While dealing with this subject and however far removed it may seem from my *fons et origo*, William the Conqueror, I cannot resist drawing the attention of travellers to the quarter-length portrait of Murat in cocked hat and dark blue coat, also at Caserta. This is the pirate of children's stories personified, and is probably an excellent likeness of the Gascon adventurer.

Achille Murat, the subject of so belated an anachronism, calls for a few more details. Napoleon Achille Murat, whose mother was Caroline, sister to Napoleon, was born in 1801. After the fall of the Empire he emigrated to America, and was postmaster for many years at Tallaharsee in Florida. He married a great-niece of Washington. His brother, Napoleon Lucien Charles, only two years younger than Achille, was recognized by Napoleon III as of imperial blood, had his debts of two million francs paid, and was granted a generous allowance from the civil list. He was the progenitor of the present Murat family. At one time Napoleon III schemed to restore his father's throne to him on the expulsion of the Neapolitan Bourbons. He died as recently as 1878, while his daughter, the Duchesse de Mouchy, a person of Proustian importance, survived till two years ago.

4. "It was at Naples only that I expected to have my ears gratified with every musical luxury and refinement that Italy could afford. My visits to other places were in the way of business, for the performance of a task I had assigned myself; but I came hither animated with the hope of pleasure. And what

lover of music could be in the place which had produced the two Scarlattis, Vinci, Leo, Pergolese, Porpora, Farinelli, Jomelli, Piccini, Traetta, Sacchini, and innumerable others of the first eminence among composers and performers, both vocal and instrumental, without the most sanguine expectations? . . . In their manner of executing music there is, at Naples, an energy and fire not to be met with elsewhere, perhaps, in the whole universe: it is so ardent as to border upon fury, and from this impetuosity of genius, it is common for Neapolitan composers, in a movement which begins in a mild and sober manner to set the orchestra in a blaze before it is finished. Like high-bred horses, they are impatient of the rein, and eagerly accelerate their motion to the utmost of their speed; as Dr. Johnson says—that Shakespeare, in tragedy, is always struggling for an occasion to be comic." (Cf. Dr. Burney's "Musical Tour in France and Italy," London, 1773.)

Of all these composers, the only music that is known, now, is a capriccio, or a pastorale, by the younger Scarlatti. Dr. Burney was right about Haydn, the Bach family, Mozart, Gluck. Is it reasonable to suppose that he was wrong about these others? Are they not undeservedly forgotten?

5. It will not be very long before this kind of scenery is extinct altogether, and it will be a sad day when that happens. The peculiar excellence of the Harkers consists in their rendering of river, or sea-scape, and in their gardens bedded out with flowers. Their technical cleverness and optimism are prodigious. I was privileged, once, to see the rose-covered studio of this delightful and deleterious* pair of painters from a boat. It is in the neighbourhood of Bosham, in whose church a daughter of King Canute is buried; and a few moments later we stranded on a shoal and were nearly drowned. My companion in this adventure was the author of "The Waste Land."

* This epithet was applied, in my hearing, by the late Sir Edmund Gosse in 1921, to a pair of brothers whom I will no further specify than this.

Printed at The Chapel River Press, Kingston, Surrey.

THE VISIT OF THE GYPSIES

By Sacheverell Sitwell

With 9 illustrations. 8/6 net

"This elusive but enchanting book. . . . It is not only that Mr. Sitwell's prose is often exquisite in form and invariably rich in colour and allusiveness; he has also a super-sensitive sense of the association of ideas, through the exercise of which his fancy is continually ranging over more than one plane of time, bridging the gulf between past and present and establishing, as it were by suggestion, the continuity of human thought and expression."

Mr. Arthur Waugh in the *Daily Telegraph.*

"Such a work as this is a glorious and romantic dream of a bygone age in which we are ready to lose ourselves." Mr. Bonamy Dobrée in the *Observer.*

"I have seldom read a book with more pleasure."

The Graphic.

P9-DOX-948